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## Religion in the works of Heinrich Heine

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RELIGION IN THE WORKS OF

HEINRICH HEINE

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By  
Frances  
Ellen F. DeRuchie

Stockton

1946

A Thesis

Submitted to the Department of Modern Languages  
College of the Pacific

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In partial fulfillment  
of the  
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APPROVED

Chairman of the Thesis Committee

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## INTRODUCTION

## A Word about Heinrich Heine

The life of Heinrich Heine presents many contradictions. He was a militant Hebrew who never held to the tenets of the Jewish faith, a Christian who admired Jesus, but despised the dogmas of Christianity, a German who loved his country with all his heart but became a voluntary expatriate. In addition, he was a poet who could rise to the very heights of lyricism, but then offend his readers with an outburst of mockery or blasphemy. With a mind so tormented, and a character so complex, it is no wonder that his writings present so many conflicting views. Only one positive trait stands out bravely and convincingly, which gives color and direction to all his writings; his love of freedom, political and intellectual, and his hatred of tyranny, in the state and in the Church.

Heine lived in an age of change. The American and French Revolutions had brought new ideas and hopes of freedom to many lands, and systems of government were changing. Science was making great strides, and daring new thoughts of human progress were in the making. The writing of Kant, Hegel, Schlegel, and Fichte were weaving new fabrics of intellectual thought. There were great figures in German and French literary circles- Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, Voltaire- and the spirit of Romanticism was in the air. Heine was impatient in his eagerness to join the throng in its fight for the new ideals. He was an icono-

clast, hammering constantly against the idols of the time and the tyranny of rulers. He cried out against the injustices shown the Jews and all enslaved peoples. He cried out for liberty in the field of politics, science, education, and religion. In an age which held the old in awe for its own sake, he was a torchbearer in many causes which are all but won today. He fought with every weapon he knew: with song, with wit, with sarcasm. He mocked the arrogant great and pled for decent human rights for all. He saw clearly what were the fundamental, divine rights of man, and never ceased his fight to have them established. He knew the present and future significance of events at a time when very few realized what was happening because important events were happening so rapidly.

It was not in Heine's nature to conform. On his trip to England, he was constantly irritated by the uniformity of everything he found there, from the unimaginative food to the monotonous rows of houses, one just like another. As a child, he chose as companions those who were generally not accepted, the niece of the hangman, (das rote Sefchen), and "the herring philosopher", a youth on bad terms in the town because of his radical ideas and love of philosophy. At Göttingen, he detested the pedantic atmosphere, where new ideas had to be held in quarantine for several decades.

He was not a standard bearer in any cause, although he took up his cudgels whenever a need arose. That is the difficulty in understanding Heine. He fought against the injustices shown the Jews, because they were an oppressed people; but he had no pity for them, and he accused them of too great a nationalism, of arrogance and stubbornness. He hated the Catholic Church for its tyranny and suppression of "Geistesfreiheit,"<sup>1</sup> yet the sum total of his praise and admiration for that organization is greater than the scorn he heaps upon it. He was not a follower. He kept in the middle of the road, like a boy with a stick, who has found that a sharp crack will break off thistle-heads on either side of the road. Heine's stick of wit and iron was constantly snapping off thistle-heads and he found an impish delight in doing the job neatly. The result is devastating to the object of his wrath, and his pages are littered with the thistle-heads of his displeasure. His mission was a thankless one. It alienated him from his family, his friends, and his own race. He was called a turncoat and a traitor, and he suffered exile as a result. To be sure, he character was full of faults, and he was a victim of sick nerves and wounded pride. Unquestionably he was not a happy man. Herman Kesten, in his introduction to Untermeyer's Heinrich Heine, says, "He was an unbeliever despite his conversion and baptism, but no man believed more

<sup>1</sup> Intellectual freedom.

strongly than he did in everything that was good, great and beautiful. He was a hedonist throughout his life, a moralist, a Bonapartist freer than any republican, a dualist, a pantheist, a cynic and idealist, a lyracist, and a writer of great prose." <sup>1</sup>

Often in his writings, Heine passes from one side of a cause to another, but his unerring irony falls on abuse and hypocrisy, even in a cause he is for the moment championing. To him, no cause was so sacred that he would not deal it a stinging blow if the blow were called for, and never was his prejudice so great that he would not praise if the praise were warranted. Thus his waspish tirades against the egotistical nationalism of the Jews, and his glowing praise of the teaching abilities of the Jesuits, whom he hated.

In the confusion of contradictions in his writings, it is sometimes difficult to determine just where he did stand in the matter of religion. To the Christians, he was always a Jew, to the Jews, he was a hated apostate, and in his own tortured mind he was neither. However, he was interested in religion in spite of himself. The Bible was for him the greatest of all books, and the nature of God a subject of constant speculation. His pages are peppered with Biblical allusions, and almost any object in his travels was likely to send him off on a tangent



of religious discussion.

In spite of a brief pagan interlude, he was a deist, although a foe of all organized religion. He returned to God in the end, and died hopeful for the future and the success of his fight for freedom.

Ich sehe die Wunder der Vergangenheit klar. Ein Schleier liegt auf der Zukunft aber ein Rosenfarbiger, und hindurch schimmern goldene Säulen und Geschmeide und klingt es süß.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Gedanken und Einfälle, p. 276.

## CHAPTER 1

## Heine's Jewish Background

Heinrich Heine was born in <sup>"</sup>Düsseldorf, probably in 1797, of middle-class Jewish parents. His father, Samson Heine, was a cloth merchant, handsome in appearance and refined in manner. From him, Heine inherited his love of music, art, and life. His mother, nee Peira Van Geldern, was the daughter of a prominent Jewish physician and statesman. She disliked music and poetry, had a horror of imagination, and was contemptuous of romantic legends and folklore. Both parents were indifferent to all but the letter of their faith, and consequently, Heine had but little formal religious training. His father abhorred atheism, and his mother, too, was a deist, tinctured with Voltaire. He learned very young that reason was more important than dogma, and he came to believe that individual preference in the matter of religion is of slight importance, since all men have about the same virtues and vices regardless of their beliefs.

Heine was given little religious instruction at home. At the age of five, however, as was customary at the time, he was sent to a private Hebrew school, known as the "cheder", where he remained about two years. Heine mentions this period but rarely, yet the impression it left on this impressionable child was deep and lasting. He learned pure Hebrew, which he found difficult enough, although

easier than Greek, because, as he reminds us in Das Buch Le Grand,<sup>1</sup> he had great predilection for the Jews, although they crucified his good name. At the cheder, he read the Bible and learned the ancient prayers. He became acquainted with the treasures of folk tales, the dietary laws and Jewish taboos. The latter he found ways to outwit. Louis Untermeyer, in his Heinrich Heine, tells this story: "It is true", Heine replied to a comrade who reproached him for stealing grapes, "we are not allowed to pick grapes on the Sabbath, but there are no laws that forbid us to bite them off with our teeth."<sup>2</sup>

Heine's verse reflects the education of the cheder. His entire collection of Hebrew Melodies is a reminder that here he learned that he was a Jew, and in spite of all that transpired later in his life to the contrary, he always remained a Jew at heart. He learned the terminology, the dates, the genealogies of his faith, and made good use of them in hundreds of allusions.

In 1806, the Napoleonic Code was introduced into the Duchy of <sup>"</sup>Julich, of which <sup>"</sup>Dusseldorf was the principal city, and the French ideal of egalite became a reality. The Jews were particularly fortunate at this time, since before the French occupation they had suffered every type of indignity. They were forced to live in dirty

<sup>1</sup>  
P.136.

<sup>2</sup>  
P.16 .

ghettos, with all privileges withheld. No Jew might appear on the main streets or parks, or leave the ghetto on Sunday. Only twenty-four Jews might marry in a year. All professional occupations were closed to them. Now with the Code Napoleon, all this was changed, and Heine's almost constant idolatry of Napoleon dates from this period. His opinion of him changed later in his life, but always Napoleon was the great liberator. Because of him, the ghetto was abolished, the Jews were free from compulsory service and marriage was unrestricted. This relief, however, was short lived. After the defeat of Napoleon at Leipzig in 1813, the old tyrannical restraints were again imposed. Heine learned very young that Jew and pariah were very nearly synonymous, and he suffered terribly with his proud and sensitive spirit. He says in Gedanken und Einfälle<sup>1</sup> that the history of the Jews is tragic, and yet if one were to write about this tragedy, he would be laughed at, and this is the most tragic fact of all.

At sixteen, he moved to Frankfort with his father, and to his humility and shame, he lived the misery of the Jews there. In <sup>"</sup>Dusseldorf he had felt the Napoleonic protection. Now he realized that there was bitter cause for the hatred between the Israelites and the Gentiles. He was forced to live in the ghetto, and to suffer untold injustices

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P.272.

and insults. Heine's pride revolted at the tyranny of it all, and he determined to escape at any cost. The ghetto of Frankfort is fully described in Der Rabbi von Bacharach. Perhaps his humiliating and pride-breaking experiences there were a part of his education, a necessary episode in the building up of Heine's philosophy regarding the whole Jewish problem.

Heine's association in Berlin, in 1822, with Der Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden brought him into contact with the outstanding Jewish scholars and teachers of Germany. This society was founded by the disciples of Moses Mendelssohn for improving the intellectual, political and social position of the Jews in Germany. Heine discusses Moses Mendelssohn in Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland.<sup>1</sup> Mendelssohn was the reformer of the German Israelites, his co-religionists. He destroyed the authority of the Talmud, and established pure Mosaism. This man, whom his contemporaries called "the German Socrates", and whom they reverently admired for his nobility of soul and force of intellect, was the son of a poor sacristan of the synagogue of Dessau. In addition to his inferiority of birth, Providence sent him into the world a hunchback, as if to teach the rabble in a striking manner that men are to be judged not by their external appearance but by

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II, p. 228 .

their intrinsic worth. Just as Luther overthrew the Papacy, so Mendelssohn overthrew the Talmud, and he did so after the same fashion, by rejecting tradition, by declaring the Bible to be the source of religion, and by translating the most important parts of it. By these means, he shattered Judaic, as Luther had shattered Christian Catholicism, for the Talmud is, in fact, the Catholicism of the Jews. It is a Gothic Cathedral, overladen, so doubt, with childish and superfluous ornament, yet awakening our astonishment by its heaven-inspiring, gigantic proportions. It is a hierarchy of religious laws, often relating to the most fanciful and ridiculous subtleties, but everywhere so ingeniously superimposed and subordinated, each part sustaining and supporting another, that it forms an awe-inspiring and colossal whole.

In Ludwig Marcus<sup>1</sup>, Heine discusses the outstanding members of the Verein. Ludwig Marcus was the linguist, the Orientalist, and Talmudic scholar and sage. Bendavid was a fountain of Jewish folklore and mythology, and a worker for the Messianic idea among the Jews. Moses Moser, Heine's faithful friend, was an ardent student of Hebrew letters. The most important literary figure in the Verein was Leopold Zunz, the father of the new "Science of Judaism", which aimed at rediscovery of Jewish historical

<sup>1</sup>  
Vorreden und Einleitungen, p.181.

and literary monuments in order to determine the chief currents of Jewish thought. His Gottesdienstliche Vorträge<sup>"</sup> den Juden, a history of Jewish sermons with profound implications, was considered the most important Jewish book of the nineteenth century.

Mendelssohn had seen that although little could be done to gain sympathy for the Jews among the Gentiles, nevertheless, the Jews might be able to help themselves by ridding themselves of their isolationism. If they could free themselves from a ghetto-consciousness, they might finally become world citizens. It was to this liberation that he devoted himself. The Verein tried to combine religion with reason. It meant to preserve the spirit of Jewish life by animating the glories of Jewish history and literature.

Inspired by his associates in the Verein, and filled with a desire to contribute to its purpose, Heine began to write articles on Jewish lore, contributing to the Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judentums. He taught in the school established by the society, and began his Rabbi von Bacharach. Gradually, however, his fervor died out. Antagonisms were increasing rather than diminishing, and he felt that members of the Verein were theorists rather than realists.

At Bonn, Heine had come into contact with the Romantic movement, and its greatest exponent, Schlegel. This school

was characterized by a wide-spread interest in the past, especially the middle ages, its legends, society and institutions. The Romantics tried to find the voice of the people. They championed the lower classes, and tried to find them worthy of poetry and literature. They included in their study all period of history and all nations, with their folk tales, legends and beliefs. This interest led to an extended study of popular beliefs, folk songs and ballads, myths and legends such as are found in Grimm's Marchen and Des Knaben Wunderhorn of Arnim and Brentano.

From Schlegel, Heine heard lectures on the Niebelungenlied and Chanson de Roland and many others. Heine was delighted and mightily impressed, and for a while, he identified himself heartily with the movement. He utilized his Jewish lore now not so much for the sake of the Jewish movement or apologia as in the Verein, but rather to enrich German literature with the treasures of Hebraic legend and history. He went into the history of the Jewish race and made an evaluation of the Jews from a purely cultural point of view. This is particularly true in his Hebraische Melodien and Der Rabbi von Bacharach, but it is also true of many scattered fragments. Many of the Hebraische Melodien are echoes of his childhood. Speaking of Jehuda Ben Halevy, Louis Untermeyer, in his Heinrich Heine, says, "Background, diction and emotion are characteristically



Jewish in the voluptuous use and celebration of the senses, in the hot colors and sharp flavors, most of all in the naive and triumphant egotism. At the very moment Heine is crying out against the world's injustice to the Jew, he is hailing the Jew's unconquerable triumphs. No Hebrew poet has ever been more unreasonably confident, more hand-in-hand with God." <sup>1</sup>

What Untermeyer is trying to say is exemplified in the following lines from the poem mentioned:

Lechzend klebe mir die Zunge  
An den Gaumen, und es wölke  
Meine rechte Hand, vergass ich  
Jemals dein, Jerusalem-

Wort und Weise, unaufhörlich  
Schwirren sie mir, "heut' im Kopfe  
Und mir ist als hört ich Stimmen  
Psalmend, Männerstimmen.

Manchmal kommen auch zum vorschein  
Bärte, schattig lange Bärte.  
Traumgestalten, wer von euch  
Ist Jehuda ben Halevy? <sup>2</sup>

In Der Rabbi von Bacharach, we find many Volkstum references, to the Jewish festivals, the Jewish home and the synagogue, Talmudic legends, tales of the Spanish Jews, descriptions of the ghettos, including the one before mentioned in Frankfurt, with its people, markets and streets. A few of Heine's Jewish allusions may be given here:

<sup>1</sup>  
P. 337 .

<sup>2</sup>  
Hebräische Melodien, p. 221.

Als ich Minka wiedersah...da sah sie aus wie der Tempel Salomons als ihn Nebukadnezer zerstört hatte.<sup>1</sup>

Salomo, nämlich der König von Juda und Israel hatte immer eine besondere Liebhaberei für Geld und Affen.<sup>2</sup>

So, wenn ich mir mein Schneider begegnete, dachte ich an die Schlacht von Marathen, begegnete mir der wohlgeputzte Bankier Christian Gumpel, so dachte ich gleich an die Zerstörung Jerusalems, erblickte ich einen stark verschuldeten portugiesischen Freund, so dachte ich gleich an die Flucht Mohamets, sah ich den Universitätsrichter, einen Mann dessen strenge Rechtigkeit bekannt ist, so dachte ich gleich an den Tod Hamans, sobald ich Wadzek sah, dachte ich gleich an die Kleopatra...<sup>3</sup>

Heine could never quite free himself from his Romanticism. In his Geständnisse, he declares:

Trotz meiner exterminatorischen Feldzüge gegen die Romantik, blieb ich doch selbst immer ein Romantiker, und ich war in einem höheren Grad als ich selbst ahnte. Nachdem ich die Sinne für romantische Poesie in Deutschland die tödlichste Schläge herbeibracht, beschlich mich selbst wieder eine unendliche Sehnsucht und ich ergriff die bezauberte Laute und sang ein Lied worin ich mich allen holdseligen Übertreibungen aller mond-scheintrunkheit, allem blühenden Nachtigallenwahnsinn der einst so geliebten Weise hingab.<sup>4</sup>

Heine's success as a poet gained him entrée into two of the best known salons of Berlin, conducted by two very intellectual Jewish women. As part of his Jewish background, their importance cannot be discounted.

1 Herrn von Schnabelewopski, p.85.

2 Ibid, p.95.

3 Das Buch Le Grand, p.135.

4 Geständnisse, p.21.

Rahel von Varnhagen was the leading woman in the intellectual life of Germany. She was far from beautiful, but she was brilliant, cultured, quick of wit, and very generous. To her home came the most important men of the time, and her influence on thought and letters was very great. In her salon, no political or religious differences were permitted to mar the social and intellectual intercourse. She had no prejudices, but an unbounded admiration for men of genius, particularly for Goethe, and her constant praise of him did a great deal towards establishing him in Germany. Heine loved her at once, and all his life, she was closer to him than any other woman. He frequented her home regularly, not only to meet great men,--Fouqué, Chamisso and Schleiermacher were some of them,--but also because she gave him what he craved most, appreciation and understanding. She could see the genius behind his unprepossessing appearance and shyness, and she overlooked his sulkiness and vanity. Varnhagen exercised almost the same attraction on his intimates. He was a man of the world, an ardent liberal and enthusiast for the cause of the people. He, too, was a staunch friend of Heine and did him many services.

The other salon was that of Elise von Hohenhausen. Elise, a poet herself, admired Heine because she admired Byron inordinately, and she saw in Heine Byronic tenden-

cies. As a matter of fact, Heine had been imitating the Byron mannerisms, his pose and careless dress, flung cape, and sad reference to his dissipations. Heine claimed that Byron was the one person with whom he felt affinity, and was delighted when Elise called him "the German Byron."

These rival salons did their best to spoil the young poet, and succeeded. However, the press at the time was still cautious, and conceded only that Heine was at least original and truly lyric.

## CHAPTER II

## Some Aspects of Judaism in Heine.

" 'May my right hand wither, if I forget thee, Jerusalem'. These are more or less the words of the psalmist, and they are mine, also, always."<sup>1</sup> So Heine wrote in a letter to his friend Moser. All his life, Heine had made a study of historica judaica, partly for his writings on Jewish subjects such as Almansor and Der Rabbi von Bacharach, but also for his own spiritual need. He was moved by strange feelings as he read through those sad annals, so full of instruction and sorrow. The spirit of Jewish history was revealed to him more and more. In a letter to Joseph Lehmann,<sup>2</sup> he says that the Jews have been left with a great instinctive civilization through an unbroken tradition of two thousand years. They have been able to play such a part in European culture just because they have had nothing to learn in the matter of feeling, and needed only to come by scholarship.

He says of Jewish history:

"Die jüdische Geschichte ist schon; aber die jungen Juden schaden den Alten, die man weit über die Griechen und Römer setzen würde; ich glaube: Gäbe es keine Juden mehr, und man wusste, es bestände sich irgendwo ein Exemplar von diesem Volk, man würde hundert Stunden reisen, um es zu sehen und ihm die Hand zu drücken."

<sup>11</sup> Memoirs, ed. Gustav Karpeles, I, 141.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 279.

und jetzt weicht man uns aus! <sup>1</sup>

He claims that the rest of Europe is raising itself to the level of the Jews, for the Jews were in possession from the earliest period of their history of the modern principle which was only in his day beginning to develop itself among European nations. <sup>2</sup> The Greeks and Romans clung with enthusiasm to the persons of their leaders; and throughout the whole of the Middle Ages, in the place of antique patriotism, came fealty of vassals and personal attachment to princes. But the Jews in all ages have clung to the law alone, to the abstract thought, just as cosmopolite Republicans, who reverence neither the land of their birth nor the person of a prince, regard the law as the highest object of respect. The true birthplace of cosmopolitanism was the soil of Judea, and Christ, who was a real Jew, was the special founder of universal citizenship. Speaking of the republicanism of the Jews reminded Heine that there were Republicans in Jerusalem who formed an opposition to the royally desposed Herodians, fought bravely, called no one master, and hated Roman absolutism with a fierce hatred. Freedom and equality were their religion.

<sup>1</sup> Gedanken und Einfälle, p.272.

<sup>2</sup> Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen, Jessika, p.172.

Heine explains the conflict between Christianity and Judaism as follows:<sup>1</sup> Judaism is an aristocracy. God has created and rules the world, and all men are His children; but the Jews are his favorites and their country is His chosen dominion. He is a monarch, the Jews are His Nobles, and the Palatinate is the Exarchate of God. Christianity, on the other hand, is a democracy. One God has created and rules the Universe. But He loves all men alike, and protects all His dominions. With the Christians, He is no longer a national, but a universal God.

In ancient days, the Jews were compelled to live in terrible isolation because of their monotheism. Moses provided, as it were, the material bulwark for the spirit against the encroaching luxury of the neighboring nobles. Round about the field where he had sown the spirit, he planted as a protecting hedge the inflexible ceremonial law and egotistical nationalism.<sup>2</sup>

There was a time when Heine did not love Moses over-much, probably because the Hellenic spirit in him predominated, and he could not forgive the lawgiver his hatred of imagination and plastic art.<sup>3</sup> He could see that Moses, in spite of his hostility to the arts, was never-

<sup>1</sup> Gedanken und Einfälle, p.270.

<sup>2</sup> Ludwig Borne, p.45.

<sup>3</sup> Geständnisse, p.50-1.

theless himself a great artist and had the real artistic temperament. Only, this artistic temperament was in him, as well as in his fellow countrymen, directed solely towards the colossal and indestructible. Unlike the Egyptians, he did not fashion works of brick and granite, but rather he built pyramids of men, he carved obelisks of men, - he took a poor shepherd tribe and created a people which should defy the centuries, a great, holy people, a people of God, which should serve all peoples as a model, and all humanity as a prototype; he created Israel!

Heine says that he never spoke with due respect of the Master or of His work with the Jews, and this, too, was because of his Hellenic temperament, which was wholly repelled by Jewish temperament. His preference for Hellas later declined. He saw that the Greeks were only beautiful youths, but that the Jews had ever been men, strong, invincible men, not only in the days of old, but even in his day, in spite of eighteen centuries of persecution and misery. He learned to judge them better, and that except that any pride of birth would be a foolish contradiction in the champion of revolution and its democratic principles, he might take pride in the fact that he was a descendant of those martyrs who had given the world a God and a morality, and had fought and suffered on every battlefield of thought.

It is interesting to note that Heine claims a kin-



ship between the German and Hebraic races in the matter of morality-"Sittlichkeit". He maintains that there is a striking similarity in the moral outlook of the two peoples, particularly shown in the reservedness of the women of both races and in their preservation of chastity and family life. He makes several references to the matter, but discusses it particularly in the following passages:

Die Juden sind ein keusches, enthaltsames, ich möchte fast sagen, ein Abstraktes Volk, und in der Sittenreinheit stehen sie am nächsten den germanischen Stämmen. Die Zuchtigkeit der Frauen bei Juden und Germanen ist vielleicht von keinem absoluten Werte, aber in ihrer Erscheinung macht sie den lieblichsten, anmutigsten und rührendsten Eindruck...

Es ist in der Tat auffallend welche Wahlverwandtschaft zwischen den beiden Völkern der Sittlichkeit, den Juden und Germanen herrscht. Diese Wahlverwandtschaft entstand nicht auf historischen Wege, weil etwa die grosse Familienchronik der Juden, die Bibel, der ganzen germanischen Welt als Erziehungsbuch diente... sie hat einen tieferen Grund, und beide Völker sind sich ursprünglich so ähnlich, dass man das ehemalige Palästina für ein orientalisches Deutschland ansehen könnte, wie man das heutige Deutschland für die Heimat des heiligen Wortes, für den Mutterboden des Prophetentums, für die Burg der reinen Geisttheit halten sollte.<sup>1</sup>

Heine shows amazing objectivity in the matter of the persecution of the Jews. In Hamburg, in 1831, he had been a witness of a disgraceful riot, an anti-Semitic demonstration, which was one of the reasons for his hatred of that city. In his essay on Jessica, in Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen, he analyzes without rancor and

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Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen, p.172.

with keen insight, the basic reasons for the persecutions, and comes to the amazing conclusion that both sides are right.<sup>1</sup>

After all, he asks in this passage, what is the cause of this hatred between the followers of the Mosaic and the Christian law? Is it an elemental hatred between brothers, which we have seen from the creation of the world, and which is exemplified in the story of Cain and Abel? Or is religion only a pretext, and men hate only to hate, as they love only to love? Who is guilty?

Heine does not condemn the hatred which persecutes the Jewish people; he condemns only the unhappy errors which cause this hatred. People are right to hate in this matter, because hatred, as well as love, has a basis in a right instinct; however, people do not regulate their feelings, and instead of finding the cause of the hatred, they turn their anger against innocent people. People suffer from want, they lack the means of "Lebensgenuss", and because the priests of the state religions assure them that man must suffer want on this earth, in spite of hunger and thirst, they must obey the authorities.

Man has a secret longing for the means of happiness, and he hates those who have the means locked up in warehouses in chests and boxes. The poor hate the rich, and

<sup>1</sup>

Shakespeares Madchen und Frauen, Jessika, p.173.

they are happy when their religion permits them to give way to this hatred with all their hearts. The common people hate the Jews because they see in them only the possessors of money. The spirit of the times gave its approval to this hatred. In the Middle Ages this approval had borne the gloomy colors of the Catholic Church, and the Jews were killed and their homes plundered because the Jews had crucified Christ. This was done with the same logic as in Santo Domingo, when some black Christians at the time of a massacre ran about with a picture of the crucified Savior and cried fanatically, "Les blancs l'ont tue', tuons nous les blancs."

But were the Jews responsible for the fact that they had all the business? (In Frankfort only twenty-four Jews might marry in a year, in order to keep the population down, and the business in Christian hands.) The guilt, Heine, claims, rather lies in the delusion of the Middle Ages, which condemned industry and business as something ignoble, and money lending as sinful. Thus business and money lending came into the hands of the Jews, who, being refused entrance into other occupations, necessarily became the craftiest merchants and bankers. They were forced to become rich, and were in turn hated because of this wealth. Although Christianity has now given up its prejudice against industry, and the Christians have become just as rich and just as great rascals as the Jews, nevertheless, the

traditional hatred has remained, and people see in the Jews the representatives of the monied class, and hate them for it.

Although Heine defended vigorously the Jewish faith in itself, his anger at times against the Jews, particularly the modern ones, knew no bounds. Speaking of the Jews in France, he writes bitterly of their hypocrisy and money-grabbing:

Viele unter ihnen üben noch den jüdischen Zeremonialdienst, den äußerlichen Kultus, mekanisch, ohne zu wissen warum, aus alter Gewohnheit, von innerem Glauben keine Spur, denn in der Synagoge ebenso wie in der christlichen Kirche hat die witzige Säure der Voltarischen Kritik zerstörend gewirkt. Bei den französischen Juden wie bei den übrigen Franzosen, ist das Gold der Gott des Tages und die Industrie ist die herrschende Religion.<sup>1</sup>

Can the Jewish problem ever be solved? The Jews will be truly emancipated only when the emancipation of Christians, with freedom for all, has been fought for and fully established. The cause of the Jews is identical with that of the German people, and they cannot desire as Jews that which has long been denied them as Germans.<sup>2</sup>

Heine's despair at the condition of his people he expresses in a touching poem dedicated to the new Jewish Hospital in Hamburg, endowed by his uncle:

Ein Hospital für arme kranke Juden  
Für Menschenkinder, welche dreifach elend

<sup>1</sup> Lutezia I, p. 57 .

<sup>2</sup> Vorreden und Einleitungen, Ludwig Marcus, p.191.

Behaftet mit den bösen drei Gebrechen  
Mit Armut, Körperschmerz und Judentume.

Das schlimmste von den dreien ist das letzte  
Das tausendjährige Familienübel  
Die aus dem Niltal mit geschleppte Plage  
Der altägyptisch ungesunde Glauben.

Unheilbar tiefes Leid! Dagegen helfen  
Nicht Dampfbad, Duche, nicht die Apparate  
Der Chirurgie, noch all' die Arzeneien  
Die dieses Haus den siechen Gästen bietet.

Wird einst die Zeit, die ew'ge Göttin, tilgen  
Das dunkle Weh, das sich vererbt vom Vater  
Herunter auf den Sohn, - wird einst der Enkel  
Genesen und vernünftig sein und glücklich?

Ich weiss es nicht! Doch mittlerweile wollen  
Wir preisen jenes Herz, das klug und liebevoll  
Zu lindern suchte, was der Lind'ung fähig  
Zeitlichen Balsam traufelnd in die Wunden.

Der teure Mann! Er baute hier ein Obdach  
Für Leiden, welche heilbar durch die Künste  
Des Arztes (oder auch des Todes!) sorgte  
Für Polster, Labetrunk, Wartung und Pflege-

Ein Mann der Tat, tat er was eben tunlich:  
Für gute Werke gab er hin den Taglohn  
Am Abend seines Lebens, menschenfreundlich,  
Durch Wohltun sich erholend von der Arbeit.

Er gab mit reicher Hand - doch reichere Spende  
Entrollte manchmal seinem Aug! die Träne,  
Die kostbar schöne Träne, die er weinte  
Ob der unheilbar grossen Bräderkrankheit. <sup>1</sup>

## CHAPTER III

## Heine's Baptism.

Dusseldorf had been under the Code Napoleon from 1803 until the defeat of Napoleon at Leipzig in 1813. It was then that the German government reimposed the old tyrannical restraints and made it impossible for a Jew to obtain any official appointment or even a university degree. The only profession open to a Jew was medicine, of which Heine had a particular horror. Heine had definitely made up his mind to obtain his degree in law at Göttingen, and there was no alternative left but to submit to baptism. It is to Heine's credit that he was torn by conflicting emotions by the thought of his apostasy. He despised the law which forced him to it, and he despised himself for yielding. His family did not oppose the act, for they were free thinkers, and opposed only to atheism. He had at least the comfort of knowing that many of his Jewish friends had preceded him in taking the step. With these, there had never been a question of conviction;—it was simply a necessary step. In a letter to Moses Moser, Heine wrote, "Cohn assured me that Gans is preaching Christianity and is trying to convert the children of Israel. If he is doing this from conviction, he is a fool; if from hypocrisy, then he is a rascal. I shall not cease to love Gans; but I confess that I would much rather have heard, instead of

the above news, that Gans had stolen a silver spoon."<sup>1</sup>

He also dreaded an act of treachery against the Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden, in which he had been so active. In the Verein, he had learned to feel a pride in his Jewish ancestry, and a responsibility towards it. He put off the step as long as possible, and finally went secretly to the Lutheran Pastor Grimm in Heiligenstadt. He submitted to an hour of catechism, and emerged from the Pastor's study as Christian Johann Heinrich. Less than a month later, he presented himself for his degree at Göttingen. He was formally declared a Doctor of Jurisprudence.

In his writings, Heine refers several times to his baptism. In a charming poem in *Die Harzreise*, he speaks, perhaps the only time without rancor, of his coming conversion:

Ach mein Kindchen, schon als Knabe  
Als ich sass auf Mutters Schooss  
Glaubte ich an Gott den Vater  
Der da waltet gut und gross;

Der die schöne Erd' erschaffen  
Und die schönen Menschen drauf  
Der den Sonnen, Monden, Sternen  
Vorgezeichnet ihren Lauf.

Als ich grösser wurde, Kindchen,  
Noch viel mehr begriff ich schon  
Und begriff und ward vernünftig  
Und ich glaub' auch an den Sohn.

<sup>1</sup>

Memoirs, ed. Gustav Karppeles 1, 152 .

An den lieben Sohn, der liebend  
 Uns die Liebe offenbart,  
 Und zum Lohne, wie gebräuchlich  
 Von dem Volk gekreuzigt ward.

Jetzo, da ich aufgewachsen  
 Viel gelesen, viel gereist  
 Schwillt mein Herz und granz von Herzen  
 Glaub' ich an den heil'gen Geist.<sup>1</sup>

In Die Harzreise also, he makes an eloquent apology for the act he is about to do, and a plea for understanding. He was no moral coward, and made no secret of his motive.

Dem, als ich dort stand, in Gedanken verloren, hörte ich plötzlich die unterirdische Musik des Zauberschlosses und ich sah wie sich die Berge ringsum auf die Köpfe stellten, und die roten Ziegeldächer zu Ilseberg anfangen zu tanzen und die grüne Bäume in der blauen Luft herumflogen, dass es mir blau und grün vor den Augen wurde, und ich sicher, vom Schwindel erfasst, in den Abgrund gestürzt wäre, wenn ich nicht in meiner Seelennot ans eiserne Kreuz festgeklammert hatte. Dass ich in so misslicher Stellung dieses letztere getan habe, wird mir gewiss niemand verdenken.<sup>2</sup>

In Gedanken und Einfälle, he humorously and correctly blames Napoleon's bad instruction in geography for his conversion:

Dass ich ein Christ ward ist die Schuld jener Sachsen die bei Leipzig plötzlich umsattelten, oder Napoleons der doch nicht hatte, nach Russland zu gehen, oder seines Lehrers, der ihm zu Brienne Unterricht in der Geographie gab, und ihm nicht gesagt hat, dass es zu Moskau im Winter sehr kalt ist.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Harzreise, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 76.

<sup>3</sup> p. 267.



With real bitterness, Heine speaks of baptism in his description of hell in Das Buch Le Grand:

In der anderen Reihe sassen die Juden die beständig schrieen und von den Teufeln zuweilen genekt wurden wie es sich denn gar posierlich ausnahm als ein dicker, pusender Pfandverleiher einen Eimer kaltes Wasser über den Kopf goss, damit er sähe, dass die Taufe eine wahre erfrischende Wohltat sei.<sup>1</sup>

Heine soon found reason to regret the step he had taken, necessary as it was. He had never adhered to the tenets of Judaism, but he felt at home in them, and was never content after his renunciation of them. By abandoning principle, he lost caste with the Jews, and could never appear convincing to the Christians. The personal independence and political preference he hoped for were illusions he never realized, and he found that he had sold himself to no purpose.

His baptism for a time interfered with his writings. Der Rabbi von Bacharach, for instance, remained a fragment. He lost interest in his defense of the Jews, and he did not know how to dispose of the question of the apostate Spanish Jew in the story.

In a letter to his friend, Moses Moser, Heine wrote, "I am now detested by Christian and Jew alike. I am very sorry that I had myself baptized; I do not see that things have gone any better with me since; on the contrary, I have had nothing but misfortune.- Is it not foolish? Scarcely

am I baptized that I am decried as a Jew. But I tell you there have been nothing but contradictions since then. But not a word; you are too wise to do more than smile at it. ...Forgive my ill humor: it is directed most against myself. Often I get up at night and stand before my mirror and abuse myself. Perhaps I am looking into the soul of my friend as in a mirror; but it seems to me that it is not so clear as it used to be." <sup>1</sup>

Simon Adler Stern, in his introduction to Scintillations says, "This (Heine's baptism) was removing 'new wine from old bottles! The flavor of the liquid was not impaired by the decanting process, but in new vessels it was admitted to feasts from which it had been excluded.'" <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, ed Gustav Karpeles, 1, 172.

<sup>2</sup> p.xiv.

## CHAPTER IV

## Some Reflections on Christianity.

Im Christentum kommt der Mensch zum Selbstbewusstsein des Geistes durch den Schmerz. - Krankheit vergeistigt, selbst die Tiere.<sup>1</sup>

Das rechte Traumen beginnt einst bei den Juden, dem Volk des Geistes, und erreichte seine höchste Blüte bei den Christen, dem Geistervolk. Unsere Nachkommen werden schauern wenn sie einst lesen welch ein gespenstisches Dasein wir geführt wie der Mensch in uns gespalten war und nur die Hälfte ein eigentliches Leben geführt. Unsere Zeit, und sie beginnt am Kreuze Christi, wird als eine Grosse Krankheitsperiode der Menschheit betrachtet werden.<sup>2</sup>

To Heine the great contribution of Christianity was the tearing down of barriers of a strict nationalism and bestowing a world citizenship on all peoples. In Ludwig Borne,<sup>3</sup> he says that Jesus Christ came to tear down the ceremonial law that had henceforth no useful purpose to serve, and even pronounced the doom of Jewish nationalism. He summoned all the kingdoms of the earth to their heritage in the Kingdom of God, which had formerly been the exclusive possession of the chosen people, and bestowed on the whole of humanity the citizen of Israel.

The desperate condition of mankind in the age of the Caesars explains the success of Christianity.<sup>4</sup> Suicide

<sup>1</sup> Gedanken und Einfälle, p. 271.

<sup>2</sup> Herrn von Schnabelewopski, p. 111.

<sup>3</sup> Ludwig Borne, p. 46.

<sup>4</sup> Gedanken und Einfälle, p. 269.

was of the most frequent occurrence among the proud Romans, who thus at once gave up the world. Whoever had not the courage to do this accepted the slow suicide of the religion of renunciation. The passion of Christ was a kind of suicide. Slaves and wretched people were the first Christians. By their numbers and by the new fanaticism that inspired them, they became a power understood by Constantine. Roman lust for universal dominion made use of this power, and disciplined it by dogma and ritual. In Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie, Heine says,

Vielleicht eben, weil die Grossen dieser Erde ihrer Obermacht gewiss sind, und im Herzen beschlossen haben sie ewig zu unserem Unglück zu misbrauchen, sind sie von der Notwendigkeit des Christentums für ihre Völker überzeugt, und es ist im Grunde ein zartes Menschlichkeitsgefühl, dass sie für die Erhaltung dieser Religion so viel Mühe geben.<sup>1</sup>

In a vivid passage, Heine says that had it been his lot to live as a simple citizen in the time of Nero, and to have been a correspondent for the Post of Boetia, or the unofficial Chronicle of Abdera, his colleagues would doubtless have had frequent occasion for witty comment on the fact that he did not furnish information about the state intrigues of the Queen mother, and that he was silent on the brilliant banquets at which the Jewish King Agrippa entertained the diplomatic corps of Rome every Saturday, but that on the contrary, he talked about certain Galileans, an obscure handful of people, consisting mostly of slaves

and old women, whose witless lives were passed in persecution and foolish visions, and who were disavowed even by the Jews. His well informed colleagues would certainly have laughed ironically if, when referring to the court entertainment, he had nothing to relate except that certain Galileans, after being covered with pitch, were set on fire to illumine the gardens of the Golden Palace. It was, however, a significant illumination, and it was an awful, a truly Roman bit of wit to utilize the so-called obscurantists as lights at these antique scenes of festival. But witticisms were turned to shame. These human torches scattered sparks of fire whereby the Roman world with all its rotten grandeur was consumed in flame. The number of that obscure handful of people became legion, and in conflict with them, the legions of Caesar were compelled to lay down their arms, and the whole empire, the sovereignty of land and sea, now belongs to the Galileans.<sup>1</sup>

For Christ Himself Heine had boundless admiration.

Er ist der Gott den ich am meisten liebe, nicht weil er so ein legitimer Gott ist, dessen Vater schon ein Gott war, und seit unendlicher Zeit die Welt herrschte; sondern weil er, obgleich ein geborener Dauphin, des Himmels, dennoch demokratisch gesinnt, keinen hoflichen Zeremonialdienst liebt, weil er kein Gott einer Aristokratie von Schriftgelehrten und galonierten Lanzknechten und weil er ein bescheidener Gott des Volkes ist, ein Bürgergott, ein bon Dieu citoyen. Wahrlich wenn Christus noch kein Gott ware, so wurde ich ihn dazu wahlen, und

1

Lutizia, Anhang, p. 261.

viel lieber als einem aufgezwungenen absoluten Gotte, würde ich ihm gehorchen, ihm, dem Wahlgotte, dem Gotte meiner Wahl.<sup>1</sup>

Would Christianity last? Heine believed that the fate of Christianity depends on whether or not we still need it.<sup>2</sup> This religion had been a benefit to suffering humanity for eighteen centuries. It was providential, holy, divine. Everything it did for the benefit of civilization in taming the strong and strengthening the tame, uniting the peoples with a common feeling and a common language, and all other benefits claimed by its apologists, was nothing in comparison with that great consolation which it in itself brought the people. Heine pays eternal reverence to the symbol of that suffering God, the Savior with the crown of thorns, whose blood was a healing balsam to the wounds of mankind. But Christianity will not last. Speaking of the Cathedral of Milan, he says, "I know very well he saw that this great stone house would in any case be a useful building, and could be used when Christianity is gone."<sup>3</sup> Again, in the same essay, he says:

Ich will nicht missverstanden sein und bemerke ausdrücklich ich stichle hier keineswegs auf die neue wedersche Kirche, jenen gotischen Dom in verjungtem Massstabe, der nur aus Ironie zwischen die modernen Gebäude hingestellt ist, um allegorisch zu zeigen wie läppisch und albern

<sup>1</sup> Die Stadt Lucca, p. 174 .

<sup>2</sup> Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie, p. 174.

<sup>3</sup> Reise von München nach Genua, p. 60.

es erscheinen würde, wenn man alte, längst untergegangene Institutionen des Mittelalters wieder neu aufrichten wollte unter den neuen Bildungen einer neuen Zeit.<sup>1</sup>

Heine was a hedonist at heart, and Christianity, the religion of renunciation, was not one that he could easily accept. He believed that man was meant for happiness, and he had a higher opinion of divinity than those pious people who believe man was created to suffer. Here on earth, by the blessings of free political and industrial institutions he can establish that happiness. But perhaps this idea as well as the old is a foolish one, and perhaps there is no resurrection for mankind in either the political, moral, or in the Catholic-apostolic sense. Gloomily, he concludes:

Die Menschheit ist vielleicht zu ewigem Elend bestimmt und die Völker sind vielleicht auf ewig verdammt von Despoten zertreten, von den Spiessgesellen derselben exploitiert und von den Lakaien verhöhnt zu werden.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Reise von München nach Genoa, p.14.

<sup>2</sup> Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie, p. 173.

## CHAPTER V

## Some Reflections on Protestantism.

For Heine, Protestantism was not a religion, it was a mission. He fought in its interest for years against the German Jesuits. He cared nothing for its dogma, and his whole Protestantism consisted in the fact that he was enrolled as an evangelical Christian in the church register of the Lutheran communion. It was the Protestant fight for freedom of thought in which he was interested. In Die Nordsee,<sup>1</sup> he questions whether people are happier in Protestantism than in Catholicism, and finds an affirmative answer. In the new ecstasy of Protestant freedom, they shouted aloud in very wantonness, thought over old-time doubts, speculated on the wonder of the day, and counted the stars by night. They do not know the number of the stars, the mystery of the day is as yet unsolved, the old doubts have become mighty questionings in our souls, - but are they happier than before? This question has no easy answer, but we do know that the happiness for which we are indebted to a lie can be no true happiness, and that in certain fragmentary moments of God-like intuition, a higher dignity of soul, a purer happiness, is ours than in the long vegetating years of blind faith.

Formerly, when philosophy was Heine's chief interest,

<sup>1</sup>  
P. 86.



he valued Protestantism only for the service it rendered in the attainment of liberty of thought, thereby providing a basis for the subsequent labors of Leibnitz, Kant and Hegel.<sup>1</sup> Luther, the strong man with the axe, must necessarily precede these champions of thought in order to clear the way for them. In this respect, he honored the Reformation as the starting point of German philosophy and justified his martial partisanship for Protestantism. In later days when the religious sentiment again swelled within him, and the shipwrecked metaphysician clung firmly to his Bible, he revered Protestantism for the service it had rendered through the discovery and spreading abroad of the sacred Book. Discovery, for the Jews, who rescued the Bible from the great burning of the Second Temple, and who bore it about with them as a portable Fatherland through the long period of the Middle Ages,- the Jews, he repeats, kept this treasure carefully concealed in their ghettos, whither German learned men, pioneers and imitators of the Reformation, crept down stealthily in order to acquire the Hebrew language and to possess themselves of the key to unlock the casket that concealed the treasure.

Heine was a life-long ardent Bible student. In Ludwig Börne,<sup>2</sup> he says that a room neighbor thought him a

<sup>1</sup> Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie, p. 189.

<sup>2</sup> Ludwig Börne, p. 51.

Pietist because whenever he paid him a visit, he found a Bible in his hands. Although he was a Hellenist at heart, he found not only entertainment, but also solid edification in the Bible.

Und ich gestehe es dir, trotzdem ich ein heimlicher Hellene bin, hat mich das Buch nicht bloss gut unterhalten sondern auch weidlich gebaut. Welch ein Buch! Gross und weit wie die Welt, wurzelnd in die Abgründe der Schöpfung und hinausringend in die blauen Geheimnisse des Himmels. „Sonnenaufgang und Sonnenuntergang, Verheissung und Erfüllung, Geburt und Tod, das ganze Drama der Menschheit, alles ist in diesem Buch. Es ist das Buch der Bücher - Biblia.<sup>1</sup>

He continues the passage by saying that the Jews might easily console themselves for the loss of Jerusalem and the Temple and the Ark of the Covenant, the sacred jewels of the High Priest, and the golden vases of Solomon. Such a loss was but trifling compared with the Bible, the indestructible treasure that was saved. It was Mohammed who called the Jews "the people of the Book", a name that still clings to them in Eastern countries. A Book is their Fatherland, their happiness and their misfortune. Immersed in a perusal of this Book, they gave little heed to the changes that took place about them in the actual world, - nations rose and fell, states flourished and became extinct, the storms of revolution swept across the earth, but the Jews, prostrate over their Book, did not notice the wild chase of time pursuing its mad career over their

<sup>1</sup> Ludwig Börne, p.44.

heads.

In Geständnisse,<sup>1</sup> Heine admits that he owed the resurrection of his religious feelings to the Bible, which was for him as much a source of health as an occasion for pious admiration. It was strange, that after having passed his whole life in gliding about the dancing floors of philosophy and abandoning himself to all the orgies of the intellect and dallying with the systems without ever being satisfied, he had at last arrived at the same point of view as Uncle Tom, taking his stand on the Bible, and kneeling beside his black brother in the same act of devotion.

Although Heine was a baptized Lutheran, he carefully avoided reference to the Lutheran communion in his writings. Undoubtedly, all his life he had felt a smouldering resentment at his enforced apostasy, and the Lutheran Church was the scene of his shame. For the founder of the faith, on the other hand, he had unbounded respect and love. In Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie,<sup>2</sup> he devotes many pages to the subject of Luther and his great contribution in establishing the German language.

To Heine Luther was not only the greatest, but also the most German man in German history. In his character were united in their most intensified form all the virtues and all the faults of the Germans, and in his person he

<sup>1</sup> p.50.

<sup>2</sup> p.195 ff.

represents the wonderful German land. He possessed those qualities which we seldom see associated, and see rather in the most hostile antagonism. He was at once a dreamy mystic and a practical man of action. His thoughts had not only wings, but also hands. He spoke and he acted; he was both the tongue and the sword. He was a complete man, in whom there was no discord between matter and spirit.

Luther's father was a miner, and the boy was often with him in his subterranean workplaces. This may have been the cause that so much earthy matter, so much of the dross of passion adhered to him, a circumstance that has often been made a reproach against him. But the reproach is unjust, for without this earthy admixture, he would not have become a man of action. Pure spirit cannot act. Still less does it become us to pronounce austere judgment on his failings; these failings have profited us more than the virtues of a thousand others. Neither the subtlety of Erasmus nor the benignity of Melancthon could ever have brought us as far as the divine brutality of Brother Martin. From the date of the Diet at which Luther disowned the authority of the Pope and publicly declared that "his doctrine could only be refuted by an appeal to the Bible itself, or on the grounds of reason", a new era dawned in Germany. The chains by which Saint Boniface had bound the Church to Rome were that day severed. The Church now broke up into religious democracies and we see the

Judaic-deistic element again rising into prominence. Evangelical Christianity emerges. Whenever the most essential claims of matter are not merely recognized but legitimized, religion once more becomes a truth,- the priest becomes a man and begets children, as God has ordained; from this time forward, especially since the natural sciences have made such progress, miracles cease.

By translating the Bible, Luther created the German language. The Divine Author of this Book, says Heine, seems to have known as well as we do, that it was not a matter of indifference by whom the Bible was to be translated, and He, himself, chose His translator, and endowed him with the marvelous faculty of translating it out of a dead and already buried language into a tongue that had as yet not come into existence. We had, it is true, the Vulgate, which was understood, and the Septuagint, which men were now beginning to understand, but the knowledge of Hebrew was quite extinct throughout the Christian world. Only the Jews, who managed to conceal themselves here and there in the corners of the earth, still preserved the tradition of this language.

How Luther succeeded in creating the language into which he translated the Bible remains a mystery. Heine admits that he does not know what was the origin of the language found in Luther's Bible. But through this Bible, which the new-born press, the black art, scattered by thousands of copies among the people, the Lutheran tongue

spread in a few years over the whole of Germany, and was raised to the ranks of a written language. This written language holds its place in Germany, and gave to that politically and religiously dismembered nation a literary unity. Every expression and every idiom found in Luther's Bible is essentially German, - an author may unhesitatingly employ it. This circumstance will, Heine concludes, when the political revolution takes place in Germany, result in a strange phenomenon- Freedom will everywhere be able to speak, and its speech will be that of the Bible.

## CHAPTER VI

### State Religion.

Heine was bitterly opposed to a state religion. Its establishment was due to the fact that rulers knew that Christianity was necessary to the State in order that subjects might obey humbly, and that there would not be too much stealing and murder. Under the name of state religion, the churches, too, were privileged. But Heine finds that institution a monster which is the enemy of the State and religion, an enemy of God and the King, or, as the usual formula goes, an enemy of the throne and the altar. In Die Stadt Lucca <sup>1</sup>, he discusses the subject at length. Heine honors the inner holiness of every religion, and subjects himself to the interests of the State. Even though he does not believe in anthropomorphism, he does believe in God, and he believes in the monarchical principle. He does not hate the throne, but he hates, as Montesquieu so well says,

"Ehrgeiz im Bunde mit dem Müßiggange, die Gemeinheit mit dem Hochmuth, die Begierde, sich zu bereichern ohne die Arbeit, die Abneigung gegen die Wahrheit, die Schmeichelei, der Verrat, die Treulosigkeit, der Wortbruch, die Verachtung der Bürgerpflichten, die Furcht vor Fürstentugend, und das Interesse an Fürstenlaster."

He does not hate the altar, but he hates the snakes which coil under its foundations.

If there were no such state religion, no privileges of dogma and cult, Germany would be united and strong,

<sup>1</sup> P.185 ff.

and its sons glorious and free. In a poor fatherland, torn with religious differences, the people are separated into inimical religious parties, Protestant subjects quarrel with the Catholic princes, and vice versa. Everywhere there is found mistrust, charges of heresy, spying on opinions, pietism, mysticism, sneering at church publications, sect hatred, and attempts at conversion. While the German people quarrel over heaven, they fall to ruin on earth. An indifference in religious matters would perhaps be what would save them, and by a weakening of the faith they could strengthen Germany politically.

It is just as bad for religion to be clothed with privileges. Its servants are dowered by the State, and in order to keep this dowry, they are pledged to represent the State, and as they mutually wash each other's hands, a wishy-washiness results, which is a foolishness before God and an abomination to man. If the State has opponents, these are enemies also of the Church, which the State privileges, and is therefore its ally. Even the harmless believers become mistrustful when they perceive in religion also political intentions. Most offensive of all is the arrogance of the priests, when they know they can count on the support of the State for the help they believe they have given it. Having lent the State the spiritual bonds to hold the people, they can now



dispose of their bayonets. Religion can never sink lower than when it is raised to a State religion, for then it loses its innocence and becomes openly proud, like an avowed mistress.

Only so long as religions have to struggle against rivals, and much more when they are persecuted than when they persecute, are they glorious and worthy of honor. Only then do we find enthusiasm, sacrifice, martyrs, and triumphal palms. How beautiful, how divinely lovely, how mystically sweet, says Heine, was the Christianity of the first centuries, when it still resembled its Divine Founder in its heroism and suffering! Then it was still the fair legend of an unobtrusive God, who, concealed under the form of a comely youth, walked under the palms of Palestine, preaching the doctrine of brotherly love and delivering that revelation of liberty and equality which the sages of later times recognized as true, and which, as the gospel of the French, became the inspiration of the epoch. Compare with the religion of Christ the various systems of Christianity set up in different countries as State religions, for example the Roman Catholic Church, or that Catholicism without poetry called the High Church of England, that pitiful decayed skeleton of faith in which all the glow of life is extinguished.

As in trade, so in religion, all monopoly is injurious.

Heine believes that only through free competition can religion remain powerful, and it will not attain again that primitive splendor until political equality in the worship of God, the right of competition in religion, is decreed.

## CHAPTER VII

## Some Reflections on Catholicism.

Heine's early instruction included a period in the 'Düsseldorf Lycee', in the buildings of an old Franciscan monastery, which he entered in 1808. He must have found the school dull and hard enough, from all his references to it. There was in the schoolroom a great wooden crucifix, before which the child prayed that he might be able to learn his irregular verbs.<sup>1</sup> He had to remain on the wooden bench the whole forenoon and had to endure "so much Latin, whippings and geography," that he rejoiced wildly when the clock struck twelve.<sup>2</sup> Most of his teachers were Jesuit priests, some of whom were freethinkers, under the influence of Voltaire. Rektor Schallmeyer Heine revered particularly. He was a friend of the family, who often discussed Heine's future with his parents, and even urged them to allow him to go to Rome and dedicate himself to the Church. His mother, however, preferred a business career for him. Nevertheless, his attendance at the school acquainted him with Catholic doctrines. He declared that, for his part, he always had a preference for Catholicism, which had its origin in his youth, and was inspired by the amiable qualities of the Catholic priests, one of whom was a master

<sup>1</sup> Das Buch Le Grand, p.136.

<sup>2</sup> Die Harzreise, p.39.

of philosophy at his school. Because in this way he had become accustomed to seeing open-mindedness and Catholicism united, the Catholic ritual was always a beautiful thing and a lovely memory of his youth, and never a thing inimical to the idea of the evolution of man.

Another of his early memories was bound up with the Church. Heine's father had bought one of the most imposing houses in Düsseldorf, and was charged with the erection of an altar at the time of the processions. He made it a point of honor to deck out the altar as beautifully and magnificently as possible. The days when the altars were decorated were holidays for the child, but this lasted only until the Prussians came to Düsseldorf. Then they took the right away from the Jews.<sup>1</sup>

As a poet, Heine was in many ways sympathetic towards the Church. He had become well acquainted with its symbolism and doctrines, and made good use of this knowledge later to praise and to damn. His lovely poem, Die Wallfahrt nach Kevlaar, so perfectly embodies the spirit of Catholicism that it is difficult to believe it was written by an unbeliever. Some of his poems to the Virgin were written, however, under the spell of Romanticism, for devout Catholicism was one of the earmarks of the movement.

Much as Heine was drawn to the Church by its poetry and

<sup>1</sup> Geständnisse, p.63.

mysticism, he later came to hate it almost fanatically, because it defied liberty, the one thing he considered desirable in life. Yet, no matter how often he felt called upon to condemn the Church, he could not withhold from it his grudging admiration.<sup>1</sup> He said that no one need accuse him of fanatical hatred of the Romish Church, for he had always been wanting in narrowness of spirit necessary for such animosity. He was too well acquainted with his own intellectual stature to suppose that he could do much harm by the fiercest assaults on such a colossal structure as the Church of St. Peter. At most, he could be but a humble laborer at the slow work of demolition, a work which might last for centuries. He was too well versed in history not to recognize the gigantic proportions of that edifice of granite. Heine says we may call it the Bastille of the spirit, we may maintain that it is now guarded by disabled soldiers, yet it is not the less certain that this Bastille will not be easily stormed, and many a young assailant will break his head against its walls. As a thinker and metaphysician, Heine could never withhold a tribute of admiration for the splendid consistency of Roman Catholic doctrine, he could never flatter himself that he had gained any victory by his wit and satire over its dogmas and creeds, and men had done him too much honor by calling him the intellectual

<sup>1</sup> Geständnisse, p.60.

kinsman of Voltaire. He was always a poet, and for this reason the poetry that blossoms and glows under the symbolism of Catholic dogma and worship could not help but reveal itself more profoundly to him than to others. So much was this the case that in his youth he was often overpowered by the "infinite sweetness, the mystery and blessed effluence, the delirious death ecstasy of Catholicism." <sup>1</sup>

In Die Nordsee, <sup>2</sup> he again pays tribute to the contributions of the Catholic Church to the progress of civilization. It took under its guardianship all the relations of life, all life's energies and manifestations, the whole man, physical and moral. He cannot deny that thereby much peaceful happiness was created, life glowed with an inner warmth, and the arts, like silently growing flowers, unfolded themselves in a splendor that is to this day an astonishment, and that we, with all our hastily acquired knowledge, cannot imitate. But the spirit has its eternal rights; it is neither hemmed in by prohibitions, nor lulled to sleep by church bells; it threw down its prison walls, and severed the iron strings that bound it to the Mother Church.

The Catholic point of view was necessary in Europe as a healing reaction against the awful materialism of the Roman Empire, which threatened to destroy the spiritual splendor of mankind:

<sup>1</sup> Geständnisse, p.61 .

<sup>2</sup> P.86.

So erkennt man auch die Heilsamkeit des asketischen Spiritualismus wenn man ein Petron oder Apulys gelesen, Bücher die man als Pièces justificatives des Christentums betrachten kann. Das Fleisch war so frech geworden in dieser Römerwelt, dass es wohl der christlichen Disziplin bedurfte es zu züchtigen. Nach dem Gastmahl eines Triumalkon, bedurfte man einen Hungerkur gleich dem Christentum.<sup>1</sup>

The Catholic Church also claims our respect in the taming of the barbarians of the North.<sup>2</sup> European civilization began with the Church. It knew how to tame powerfully, by means of its genial institutions, the bestiality of the northern barbarians and their brutal materialism. The sweet face of the Madonna was a powerful attraction for these people, and helped draw them into the Church.

On the other hand, the Catholic Church is at fault in its condemnation of all flesh and its desire to conquer even the spirit. It is a religion which, by its unnatural doctrine of renunciation, made the sin of hypocrisy the result of denial of the flesh and the pleasure of the senses. The doctrine of "Hundesdemut" became the greatest support of despotism. We know now that the material has its good side and is not all of the devil's making, and we vindicate the good things of earth as our undeniable heritage. Thus the Catholic viewpoint has come to an end.

Heine was very certain that the Church would die. In

<sup>1</sup> Die Romantische Schule, p.33.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.33.

Gedanken und Einfalle,<sup>1</sup> he says that the Romish Church is dying from a disease from which no one recovers, exhaustion through the power of time. With her usual wisdom, she declines the aid of a physician; in her long experience, she has seen many an aged person die sooner than need be, because an energetic physician undertook the cure. Her agony, however, will be of long duration.

Heine frequently compares the Catholic and Protestant churches, but particularly in Die Bader von Lucca.<sup>2</sup> The Catholic priest is more like a clerk who is employed in a big business, the Church, the great house at the head of which is the Pope, who gives him a set salary. He works lazily, like one who is not working for himself, -he has many colleagues and thus easily remains unnoticed in this big business enterprise. He is concerned only in the credit of the house, and still more in its preservation, since he would be deprived of his livelihood if it went into bankruptcy. The Protestant clergyman, on the other hand, is his own boss, and carries on the religious business on his own responsibility. He has no wholesale trade like his Catholic brother-tradesman, but deals merely in retail, and since he, himself, must understand it, he cannot afford to be lazy. He must praise his articles of faith to the people, and must disparage the articles of his competitors. Like

<sup>1</sup> p.272.

<sup>2</sup> p.163.



a true small tradesman, he stands in his retail store, full of envy of the industry of all large houses, particularly the large house in Rome, which has so many thousand book-keepers and packers on its payroll, and which owns factories in all four corners of the world.

Again, in the same essay,<sup>1</sup> the amusing Herr Hyacinth, (Herr Hirsch in Hamburg), the servant of the wealthy Mr. Gumpel, discusses his feelings towards all the religions of the time. He is a servant, and therefore not a friend of the Catholic Church. It is an excellent religion for a baron, who is idle all day, and a connoisseur of art. But it is not a religion for a Hamburger and a lottery collector, who must write down carefully the numbers that are drawn, and if he accidentally thinks of the Catholic bells, or if he gets dizzy before his eyes with Catholic incense, and writes the wrong numbers, it wouldn't be so good. He sees no pleasure in a religion in which God was, God forbid, a dead man, and the church smelled of incense as at a funeral. As to Protestantism, it is little better. If there were no organ in the Protestant Church, it wouldn't be a religion. It does no harm, and is as clear as a glass of water, but it doesn't help either. Herr Hyacinth had visited one in Hamburg once, which was the bare kind, where there was nothing but brown bench<sup>ee</sup> and white walls, and on the wall was nothing but a blackboard, on which a half dozen numbers

<sup>1</sup> P.111.

were written. He thought perhaps these numbers might accomplish a miracle as well as the picture of the Virgin, or a bone to her husband, Joseph, and in order to test it, he went to Altona and put the numbers in a lottery. None of the Protestant numbers was drawn, and so it would be foolish to risk his hopes of salvation in a religion on which he had put and lost four marks and fourteen shillings. As to the Jewish religion, he wouldn't want it for his worst enemy. One has only "Schimpf und Schande" for it. It is not a religion, it is a misfortune. Since Heine has more or less identified himself with Herr Hyacinth, the remarks have more than a little significance.

Heine was never comfortable in Protestant churches. He hates the coldness and barrenness of them. In contrast, he often speaks of the comfort in the Catholic churches:

Wahrlich ein solcher Dom mit seiner gedämpften Lichte und seiner wehenden Kühle ist ein angenehmer Aufenthalt wenn draussen greller Sonnenschein druckende Hitze. Davon hat man gar keinen Begriff in unserem protestantischen Norddeutschland, wo die Kirchen nicht so komfortabel gebaut sind und das Licht so frech durch die unbemalten Vernunftscheiben hineinschiesst, und selbst die kühlen Predigten vor der Hitze nicht genug schützen. Man mag sagen was man will, der Katholizismus ist eine gute Sommerreligion. Est lässt sich gut liegen auf den Banken dieser alten Dom, man genießt dort die kühle Andacht, ein heiliges dolce far niente, man betet und träumt und sündigt in Gedanken, die Madonnen nicken so verzeihend aus ihren Nischen, weiblich gesinnt verzeihen sie sogar, wenn man ihre eigenen holden Züge in die sündigen Gedanken verflochten hat, und zum Überfluss steht noch in jeder Ecke ein brauner Notstuhl des Gewissens, wo man sich seiner Sünden entledigen kann.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Die Stadt Lucca, p. 171.

Again, in another somewhat profane passage, he shows his inclination toward the Catholic Church, but how his reason always returns and bring him back to his matter-of-fact Protestantism:

Meine schöne, oftgeküsste, schlanke, katholische Francheska - für diese einzige Nacht die du mir noch gewahrst, will ich selbst katholisch werden. O die schöne, selige katholische Nacht! Ich liege in deinen Armen, strengkatholisch glaube ich an den Himmel deiner Liebe, won den Lippen küssen wir das holde Bekenntnis, das Wort wird Fleisch, der Glaube wird versinnlich in Form und Gestalt, welche Religion! Ihr Pfaffen! Jetzt underdessen eu'r Kyrie eleison klingelt, räuchert, läutet die Glocken, lasst die Orgel brausen, lasst die Messe von Palastrina erklingen "Das ist der Leib!" - ich glaube, ich bin selig, ich schlafe ein - aber sobald ich des andern Morgens erwache, reibe ich den Schlaf und den Katholizismus aus den Augen, und sehe wieder klar in die Sonne und in die Bibel und bin wieder protestantisch vernünftig und nüchtern wie vor.<sup>1</sup>

In Paris, Heine had perceived, with some alarm, the wave of propaganda instituted by the Republicans, for reestablishing the authority of the Church, by means of establishing schools and universities, and an effort to subjugate the intellects of the rural population to their cause. With the restoration of the faith of their ancestors, the privileges of their ancestors were to be restored. Thus he saw women of the highest rank making a parade, as lady patronesses of religion, of their devout sentiments, endeavoring everywhere to win souls for heaven, and by their devout example attracting the whole fashionable world to their

<sup>1</sup> Die Stadt Lucca, p. 171.

churches. Heine tells that on a certain Easter Sunday, the churches were never better filled. Devotion, in elegant costume, thronged especially to Saint Roche and Notre Dame de Lorette,--here was a grand display of saintly magnificent toilettes,--there with the pious dandy presenting the holy water to fair devotees,-- and here again, the graces kneeling in prayer. Will this be of long duration? he asks. Will not this religiosity, after having been the reigning mode, also speedily submit to a change of fashion? Is this flush on the cheek of religion a sign of Health? "God has had many visitors today," he said to a friend as he beheld the crowd thronging the churches. "They are paying farewell visits," said his incredulous friend.<sup>1</sup>

Heine had a particular contempt for those ritualistic believers whose delight it was to have their drowsy souls tickled by ecclesiastical music and particular saints,--those dilettantes of religion who talk sentimentally about the church, without showing any desire to conform rigidly to its dogmas, who merely flirt with sacred symbols, but shrink from any serious communication with them,-- those Catholics whom the French call Catholiques Marrons, -- who crowd the fashionable churches such as the Madeleine and Notre Dame de Lorette,

...jene heiligen Boudoirs, wo der "süsslichste Rokoko-geschmack herrscht, ein Weihkeßel, der nach Lavandel duftet, reichgepolsterte Betstühle, rosige Beleuchter-

<sup>1</sup> Lutezia, p.39. .

ung und schmachtende Andacht, die sich fächert mit Evan-  
tails von Boucher und Watteau, - Pompadour-christentum.<sup>1</sup>

Just as Heine held that he felt no blind hatred to-  
wards the Roman Catholic Church, so also he held no rancor  
against the priests, even though he had to rail against  
them as a class. He was grateful to the Jesuits for his  
early education, which was much better than that which he  
received when the Jesuits were driven out. In Geständnisse<sup>2</sup>  
Heine pays his respects to the Jesuits, and particularly  
to their genius for teaching. For, he reminds us, no matter  
what opinion we have of them in other respects, it must be  
admitted that in the art of instruction they gave abun-  
dant proof of their practical sense. Although the effect of  
their method of teaching was to present a sadly mutilated  
idea of ancient culture, at least they succeeded in popular-  
izing the knowledge of antiquity and democratizing it, for  
they caused it to be spread among the masses of people. On  
the other hand, by our present system, the individual aris-  
tocrat of the intellect no doubt attains a more intimate  
acquaintance with antiquity, but the great mass of people  
seldom retain any scrap of classical lore, any fragment of  
Herodotus, any fable of Aesop, any verse of Horace in a  
corner of their brain, whereas formerly poor folk always  
had a crust of early childhood learning at which they could  
keep munching during the rest of their days. A cobbler once

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 271.

<sup>2</sup> P. 61.

said to Heine, "What an ornament is a little scrap of Latin to the whole man." He could quote Cicero and other passages which he had learned in the colleges of the Jesuits. Teaching was their specialty, although they sought to direct it wholly in the interests of their order. Teaching, the only human passion that remained to them, often made them forget their aim, the suppression of reason in the interest of belief, and instead of making children of men, as they intended, they made men of children. The greatest heroes of the Revolution were sent forth from the schools of the Jesuits, and without such discipline as was there acquired, that great upheaval of human spirit might have been delayed for a century.

Arme Väter der Gesellschaft Jesu! Ihr seid der Popanz und der Sündenbock der liberalen Partei geworden, man hat jedoch nur eure Gefährlichkeit, aber nicht eure Verdienste begriffen. Was mich betrifft, so konnte ich nicht einstimmen in das Zetergeschrei meiner Genossen, die bei dem Namen Loyola immer in Wut gerieten, wie Ochsen, denen man einen roten Lappen vorhält! Und dann, ohne im geringsten die Hut meiner Parteiinteressen zu verabsäumen, musste ich mir in der Besonnenheit meines Gemütes zuweilen gestehen wie es oft von der kleinsten Zufälligkeit abhing, dass wir dieser statt jener Partei zufielen und uns jetzt in einem ganz entgegengesetzten Feldlager befanden.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Geständnisse, p. 62.

## CHAPTER VIII

## Catholicism and Art

From his earliest days, Heine had come into contact with Catholic rites. His attendance at the Jesuit school and the friendship of Rektor Schallmeyer had made him familiar with them, and at home, his parents were sympathetic towards them. Later in his life, Heine may have hated the Church as a militant force, but he never ceased to love it for the beauty it fostered. Speaking of the Cross,<sup>1</sup> Heine says that the poet must reverence the magnet of this symbol. In every walk of life, its symbolism is felt, particularly in the arts. He becomes lyric on the subject of Gothic architecture.<sup>2</sup> How harmoniously the cathedrals accord with the worship of which they are the temples, and how the idea of the church reveals itself in them. Everything strives upwards, everything transubstantiates itself. The stone buds forth its branches and foliage and becomes a tree; the fruit of the vine and the ears of corn become flesh and blood; man becomes pure spirit. For the poet, the Christian life of the Middle Ages is a precious and inexhaustibly fruitful field. Only through Christianity could the circumstances of life continue to form such striking contrasts, such motley sorrow, such wierd beauty, that one almost fancies that such things can never have had any real existence,

<sup>1</sup> Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie, p.174.

<sup>2</sup> Die Romantische Schule, p.39.

and that it is a vast fever-dream, a dream fever of a delirious deity.

Once when Heine was standing before the Cathedral of Amiens, admiring with mingled feelings of awe and pity this monument, whose giant proportions testify to the strength of giants and its sculptural ornamentation to the unwearied patience of dwarfs, a friend inquired of him how it came that this age is incapable of rearing such edifices. To this Heine replied that men in those olden days had convictions, whereas the moderns have only opinions, and something more than opinions are necessary to the erection of a Gothic cathedral.

Heine's essay, Die Romantische Schule, is almost entirely devoted to the effect of Christianity, more particularly Catholicism, on the arts. The main thesis of the essay is that Christianity, with its doctrine of the damnation of the flesh, created an hypocrisy which affected all the arts, although great artists were able to outwit the doctrine to some degree. With the Reformation, and freedom of thought, the artists for the first time had a free hand in creation.

In literature, the epic poetry of the Reformation sets forth clearly the doctrine of self-abnegation, of abstinence, and the denial and contempt of worldly goods. Romantic

<sup>1</sup> "Über die französische Bühne," p. 123.



art had to set forth, or rather signify the infinite and purely spiritual, and took refuge in a system of traditional or rather parabolistic symbols, as Christ himself had sought to render clear His spiritual ideads by all kinds of beautiful parables. Hence the mystical, problematic, marvellous and transcendental in the art work of the Middle Ages, in which fantasy makes her most sensible images, and invents colossal follies, piling Pelion on Ossa and Parsifal on Titurel to attain to heaven.

We cannot say much as to the music of the Middle Ages, for original documents, which might have served for our guidance, are wanting. It was not until late in the sixteenth century that the masterpieces of Catholic church music, which cannot be too highly praised, appeared. These express in the most exquisite manner pure Christian spirituality. The recitative arts, which are spiritual from their very nature, could flourish fairly in Christianity, yet it was less favorable to those of design, since these had to represent the victory of mind over matter, yet had to use matter with which to work. Thus they had a problem against Nature to solve.

For this reason, we find in sculpture and painting those revolting subjects, - martyrdoms, crucifixions, dying saints, and the flesh crushed in every form. Such themes were martyrdom for sculpture. Heine says that when he contemplates those distorted images in which Christian asceticism

and renunciation of the senses are expressed by distorted, pious heads, long, thin arms, starveling legs and awkwardly fitting garments, he felt an indescribable compassion for the artists of the time.

The painters were more favored, for the material of their work, because of its susceptibility to varied play of color, did not antagonize spiritually so obstinately as the material of the sculptors, yet they were obliged to load the canvas with the most repulsive forms of suffering. In truth, when we regard many galleries which contain nothing but scenes of bloodshed, scourging and beheading, one might suppose that the old masters had painted for the collection of an executioner.

Human genius can transform and glorify even the unnatural, and many painters solved this problem by making beautiful and elevating what was revolting. The Italians, particularly, did this with their many beautiful pictures of the Madonna. This image of immaculate beauty, which is glorified by maternal love and suffering, had the privilege of being made famous by poets and painters.

Architecture of the Middle Ages had the same character as the other arts. When we enter a Gothic cathedral, we hardly suspect its symbolism. The interior is a hollow cross, and we wander among the instruments of martyrdom itself. The colored windows cast on us red and green light, like blood and corruption; funeral songs wail

<sup>1</sup> Die Romantische Schule, p. 38.

around us; under our feet are gravestones and decay; and the soul, tearing itself painfully from the body, soars to a giddy height. When, however, we behold the exteriors of these Gothic cathedrals, these enormous building which are wrought so aerially, so finely, so delicately, transparently, cut as it were, into such fine open work that one might take them for Brabant lace in marble, then we truly feel the power of that age which could so master stone itself that it seems transfused with spiritual life, and thus even the hardest material declares Christian spirituality.

Heine has referred several times to his pain at seeing certain Catholic statues. In Die Harzreise, he mentions the great crucifix of wood in the Cathedral of Goslar:

Dieser Christuskopf mit natürlichen Haaren und Dornen und blutbeschmiertem Gesichte zeigt freilich höchst meisterhaft das Hinsterven eines Menschen aber nicht eines gottgeborenen Heilands. Nur das materielle Leiden ist in dieses Gesicht hineingeschnitzelt, nicht die Poesie des Schmerzes. Solch Bild gehört eher, in einem anatomischen Lehrsaal als in ein Gotteshaus.<sup>1</sup>

When in Leyden, Heine lived in the home of the Dutch artist Jan Steen, whom he considers as great an artist as Rafael.<sup>2</sup> Even as a religious painter, Heine considers him just as great, and we shall see that clearly when the religion of pain is wiped out, and the religion of joy takes its place. No nightingale can sing so jubilantly as Jan Steen has painted. No one understands so clearly as he that our life is a

<sup>1</sup> p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Herrn von Schnabelewopski, p. 107.

kiss of God, and that the Holy Ghost expresses itself best in light and laughter.

Many poets and writers of the Romantic period had gone over to Rome, a fact which caused much concern and anger among the friends of intellectual freedom and Protestantism.<sup>1</sup>

Herr Gorres and Clemens Bretano were Catholics by birth. Others were born to Protestantism, and their coming over had necessitated a public act of profession. Among these were Friedrich Schlegel, Ludwig Tieck, Novalis, Werner, Schuss, Carove, Adam Müller and many others. The number of artists who renounced their evangelical faith was even greater. Heine, too, was drawn as by a magnet to the poetry and symbolism of the Church in his brief Romantic period. He poems to the Virgin and the lovely poem, Die Wallfahrt nach Kevlaar, have already been mentioned.

In a beautiful passage in Die Harzreise, he describes a sunset, a passage strikingly similar to the Orient Ode of Francis Thompson:

Wohl ein Viertelstunde standen alle ernsthaft schweigend und sahen, wie der schöne Feuerball im Westen allmählich wiedersank; die Gesichter wurden vom Abendrot angestrahlt, die Hände falteten sich unwillkürlich; es war, als standen wir, eine stille Gemeinde, im Schiffe eines Riesendoms, und der Priester erhöbe jetzt den Leib des Herrn, und von der Orgel herab ergosse sich Palastrinas ewiger Choral.<sup>2</sup>

Just as the arts are only the mirror of Life, as

<sup>1</sup> Die Romantische Schule, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> P. 61.

Catholicism died away, so its influence grew dimmer in the arts. During the Reformation, Greek song and art replaced the old Catholic art. The arts as well as Luther protested. Leo X, that splendid Medici, was as zealous a Protestant as Luther, and just as there was a Latin prose protest in Wittenberg, so art protested poetically in Rome in stone, color and ottavarima. Do not the mighty images of Michael Angelo, the laughing nymphs of Guilio Romano and the joyous intoxication of life in the verses of Ludovico Ariosto form a protesting opposition to the old, gloomy, worn-out Catholicism? <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Die Romantische Schule, p. 40.

## CHAPTER IX

## A Pantheistic Interlude

Heine's father had suspected him of atheistic tendencies, and had warned him against it in the longest admonition he had ever given him. Amusingly, his best argument against it was that it hurt business:

Man hatte mich der Gottesleugnen angeklagt, und mein Vater hielt mir deswegen eine Standrede, die längste die er wohl je gehalten und die folgendermassen lautete: "Lieber Sohn! Deine Mutter lässt dich beim Rektor Schall-Meyer Philosophie studieren. Das ist ihre Sache. Ich meinestheils liebe nicht die Philosophie denn sie ist lauter Aberglaube und ich bin Kaufmann und habe meinen Kopf nötig für mein Geschäft. Du kannst Philosoph sein, soviel du willst, aber ich bitte dich, sage nicht öffentlich was du denkst, denn du würdest mir in mein Geschäft schaden, wenn meine Kunden erführen dass ich einen Sohn habe, der nicht an Gott glaubt. Besonders die Juden würden keine Velveteens mehr bei mir kaufen und sind ehrliche Leute, zahlen prompt und haben auch recht an die Religion zu halten. Ich bin dein Vater und also älter als du und dadurch auch erfahrener; du darfst mir also aufs Wort glauben wenn ich mir erlaube dir zu sagen dass der Atheismus eine grosse Sünde ist."<sup>1</sup>

Heine, however, could not understand God, and that irritated him, so he refused to accept Him. He said:

Der Gedanke der Persönlichkeit Gottes als Geist ist ebenso absurd wie der rohe Anthropomorphismus; denn die geistliche Attribute bedeuten nichts und sind lächerlich ohne die Körperlichen.<sup>2</sup>

Heine believed that both Christianity and paganism had failed.<sup>3</sup> The problem and goal of paganism was to

<sup>1</sup> Memorien, p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> Gedanken und Einfälle, p. 286.

<sup>3</sup> Gestandnisse, p. 255.

obtain happiness. The Greek hero called happiness the Golden Fleece, and the German hero called it the Treasure of the Niebelungen. The task of Christianity, on the other hand, was abnegation, and its heroes endured the sufferings of martyrdom. They loaded the cross on their own shoulders, and from their mightiest combat, their only gain was the grave. We must never forget that the Golden Fleece and the treasure of the Niebelungen brought great suffering on their possessors. The error was that they mistook gold for happiness. As regards the thing of chief importance, they were right. One must be ever striving to acquire real happiness on earth, and not a cross. The latter he will get when he reaches the churchyard.

Once, when Heine was talking to Hegel <sup>1</sup> on a beautiful starlit evening, the poet began to speak sentimentally of the stars, which he called the "abode of the blessed". Hegel replied that the stars were merely a brilliant leprosy on the face of the heavens. Heine, only twenty-two at the time, replied, "In God's name, is there then no happy place above, where the virtuous after death may find reward?" Hegel stared at the boy a moment, and then replied, "You think that you should have a gratuity for tending your sick mother, or for not poisoning your elder brother?" Heine was young and proud, and it still

<sup>1</sup> Gestandnisse, p. 255.

further raised his vanity to learn from the great Hegel that, not as his grandmother supposed, God, who lived in heaven, but he, himself, here on earth, was the real god.

Heine might well have been forecasting the religious sentiments of the Hitler era in two vicious passages in which he foretells in fearful words the godlessness of modern Germany and its awful lust for war:

Denn Deutschland ist der gedeihlichste Boden des Pantheismus; dieser ist der Religion unserer grössten Denker, unserer besten Künstler, und der Deismus, wie ich späterhin erzählen werde, ist dort längst in der Theorie gestürzt. Er erhält sich dort nur noch in der gedankenlosen Masse, ohne vernünftige Berechtigung, wie so manches andere. Man sagt es nicht, aber jeder weiss es; der Pantheismus ist das öffentliche Geheimnis in Deutschland. In der Tat, wir sind dem Deismus erwachsen. Wir sind frei und wollen keinen donnernden Tyrannen. Wir sind mündig, und bedürfen keiner väterlichen Vorsorge. Auch sind wir keine Machwerke eines grossen Mechanismus. Der Deismus ist eine Religion für Uhrmacher.<sup>1</sup>

Der Gedanke geht der Tat voraus, wie der Blitz dem Donner. Der deutsche Donner ist freilich auch ein Deutscher und ist nicht sehr gelenkig, und kommt etwas langsam herangerollt; aber kommen wird er, und wenn ihr es einst krachen hört, wie es noch niemals in der Weltgeschichte gekracht hat, so wisst: der deutsche Donner hat endlich sein Ziel erreicht. Bei diesem Geräusche werden die Adler aus der Luft tot niederfallen, und die Löwen in der fernsten Wüste Afrikas werden die Schwänze einkneifen, und in ihren königlichen Höhlen verkriechen. Es wird ein Stück aufgeführt werden in Deutschland, wogegen die französische Revolution nur wie eine harmlose Idylle erscheinen möchte.<sup>2</sup>

In Vorredungen und Einleitungen,<sup>3</sup> he says that indeed our grandchildren will think that they are listening to

<sup>1</sup> Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie, p. 217.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 276.

<sup>3</sup> p. 194.



fairy tales when they one day hear the things that we have believed and suffered, and will sympathize with us. Some day when they are sitting in a joyful assembly of the gods, in a temple palace they have consecrated to themselves, and entertain themselves with stories of mankind, perhaps one of the old men will tell of the time when a dead man was worshipped as a god, and celebrated by a ghostly "Leichenmahl" in which one imagined that the bread which one ate was his flesh, and that the wine which one drank was his blood. At this, the cheeks of the women will grow pale, and the wreaths will tremble on the lovely heads. But the men will sprinkle fresh incense over the hearth in order to dissipate the awful, gloomy memories.

Heine explains his Pantheism.<sup>1</sup> God is identical with the world. He manifests himself in plants, which without consciousness, lead a cosmic-magnetic life. He manifests himself in animals, who in their sensuous dream life live a more or less stupid existence. Most splendidly, He manifests himself in man, who can think and feel at the same time, and who feels himself individually separated from objective nature. He continues:

In Menschen kommt die Gottheit zum Selbstbewusstsein, und solches Selbstbewusstsein offenbart sie wieder durch den Menschen. Aber dieses geschieht nicht in dem einzelnen und durch den einzelnen Menschen; sondern in und durch die Gesamtheit der Menschen: so dass jeder Mensch

<sup>1</sup> Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie, p. 216.

nur ein Teil des Gott-Welt-Alls auffasst und darstellt, alle Menschen zusammen aber das ganze Gott-Welt-All, in der Idee und in der Realität auffassen und darstellen werden. Jedes Volk vielleicht hat die Sendung, einen bestimmten Teil jenes Gott-Welt-Alls zu erkennen und kundzugeben, eine Reihe von Erscheinungen zu begreifen und eine Reihe von Ideen zur Erscheinung zu bringen, und das Resultat den nachfolgenden Völkern, denen eine ähnliche Sendung obliegt, zu überliefern. Gott ist daher der eigentliche Held der Weltgeschichte, diese ist sein beständiges Denken, sein beständiges Handeln, sein Wort, seine Tat; and von der ganzen Menschheit kann man mit Recht sagen, sie ist eine Inkarnation Gottes! <sup>1</sup>

Heine thinks that it is a false opinion that this religion of Pantheism will lead man to indifference. On the contrary, his consciousness of divinity will inspire him to a manifestation of it, and will glorify the truly great deeds of true heroism. He grieves that Deism is at an end, and feels a great pity that God is lost. In a beautiful passage, he tells the history of our search for Him.<sup>2</sup> We have known Him from His cradle days in Egypt, when He was worshipped in sacred calves, crocodiles, holy onions, ibises and cats. We saw Him when He said farewell to the playmates of His childhood and to the obelisks and sphinxes of His native home, and became a God-king in Palestine among poor shepherd folk. We saw Him later, when He came into contact with the Assyrian-Babylonian civilization and renounced His all-too-human passions, and no longer spewed forth nothing but anger and revenge, and thundered against every trifle. We saw Him come from Rome, the capitol city, where

<sup>1</sup> Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie, p. 217.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 235.

He renounced all national prejudices, and proclaimed the heavenly equality of all peoples, and spoke with such beautiful phrases against Jupiter, until at last He overcame all opposition and succeeded in ruling from the capitol the city and the world- urbem et orbem. We saw how He became spiritual, how He became a loving father and a common friend of man, a happiness to the world, a philanthropist. But all this could not help Him.

Hört ihr das Glöckchen klingen? Kniet nieder, man bringt die Sakramente einem sterbenden Gotte!

He ends with the following awful prophecy, which has come true in our day.<sup>1</sup> Christianity has occasionally calmed the German lust for war, but it cannot destroy its savage lust. Once the Cross, that restraining talisman, is broken, the old Norse fury will take the command and will rise from the forgotten ruins and rub the dust of a thousand years from its eyes. Thor will leap to life and will bring down the cathedrals. When the crash comes, it will come as nothing ever heard in history.

<sup>1</sup> Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie, p.276.

## CHAPTER X

## Saint Simonism

In Paris, one of the first things Heine did was to attend a meeting of the Saint Simonists, who were to exert an important, if temporary, influence on him. Count Saint Simon had been a noble of great wealth, who had lost everything in the French Revolution. He was convinced, after much travel and experience, that the ills of the world could be cured only by applied science. He published, unsuccessfully, books on practical metaphysics, and only after his death did his disciples take up his work, reinterpret, and finally ruin it. Bazard and Engantín were the leaders. They established schools, gave lectures, edited the Bible. Both believed in a kind of communism, and Engantín stressed a theatrical and hardly disguised sexual appeal. The movement was first a religion, then a cult, which finally died of its own excesses.

The movement won many converts in France, especially among the intellectuals, who had discarded Christianity, and were hungering for a new faith. Many of the converts were Jews who had drifted from their own faith and needed something to cling to. Its priests were the artists, and the cult satisfied the appetite for pleasure.

According to Lewis Browne,<sup>1</sup> Saint Simonism had fired

<sup>1</sup> Lewis Browne, That Man Heine, p. 209.

Heine's imagination. This religion was just what he had been seeking for years. It seemed to hold out to him all that he needed most desperately, a mighty faith that would polarize all his efforts. For Saint Simonism was spiritual, aesthetic and ethical, yet it was not superstitious, tawdry or puritanical. It preached the freedom of all men, and declared that artists and scientists, not kings or princes, were the true aristocrats. It spoke for internationalism and world peace; it scorned asceticism and exalted the pagan love of the flesh; above all, it believed in the holiness of beauty.

Heine became very enthusiastic about the movement. He was convinced that the highest obstacle in the way of revolution was the hostility between nations. As soon as the hostility was ended, the downtrodden in each land would be free at last to turn on their real enemies, and then the overthrow of the aristocrats would be inevitable. He became in his writings one of the first of the great modern internationalists. His Die Romantische Schule is colored by Saint Simonist thinking, as well as his Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland. The main thesis of the latter is the struggle for supremacy of the two ancient foes, spiritualism and sensualism, which was discussed in the chapter on Catholicism. In history the ancient gods had extolled the senses, and thence came

Christianity with its morbid asceticism. Protestantism followed, unleashing German thought and making philosophy possible. Kant had destroyed Deism in Germany. Then came Spinoza, who taught a Pantheism quite different from that of the Saint Simonists. According to Spinoza, God is in all things, - in stone, plants, beasts and men. Every man is a part of God, and the whole of man is the incarnation of God.

About this time, Heine got into difficulties with his writings. A blanket proscription was placed on all books written by any member of what was called the Young Germany group. These had become increasingly daring, and their doctrines were considered dangerous and subversive. Primarily, their doctrines were religious and moral rather than political, yet out of them came new ideas of feminism, free love, anti-Christianity and rights of the individual, all indirectly inspired by Saint Simonism, and Heine was the leader of the group. However, about ten years later, Heine gave up the movement, for he felt that it had become sterile, having tired of its utopian idealism, and the leaders having taken up financial scheming. Enfantin and other leaders had become builders of railroads, and Heine turned again to Deism.

Some extracts from his letters give a good insight into his feelings of the latter period. "Perhaps, " he

says, in a letter to Heinrich Laube,

"You will have understood without these remarks why I have always enthroned myself behind Protestant authority, just as you will easily understand the subtlety of my opponents, who relegate me to the synagogues, me, the born antagonist of Jewish, Mohammedan and Christian Deism. But you have no idea of the compassion with which I look down upon those worms. The malefactors of the present can do little against him who knows the magic words of the future. I know what I am. Lately one of my Saint Simon friends in Egypt said a thing which made me laugh, although it was seriously meant: he said that I was the First Father of the Church of the Germans." <sup>1</sup>

In a letter to Varnhagen von Ense, he says,

"That the Saint Simonists have withdrawn is perhaps a good thing for the doctrine itself, it will perhaps fall into wiser hands. The political part, especially the doctrine of property, will be better worked out. For my part, I am only interested in the religious ideas, which need only be expressed for them sooner or later to enter into common life. Germany will fight lustily for its spiritualism.... Squires and parsons have lately feared the power of my words more than ever, and have sought to make them unpopular, and will probably misuse these expressions in order to accuse me of seeming materialism or atheism. They will probably make me out a Jew or a Saint Simonean. No consideration of caution shall induce me to veil my conception of divine things with the usual equivocation, and my friends will probably be angry with me for not concealing my thoughts, and for bringing to light the most delicate matters, and for causing trouble,-- neither the animosity of my enemies nor the silliness and folly of my friends shall keep me from expressing straightforwardly and openly my opinion of the most vital questions of humanity, the existence of God.

I do not belong to the materialists who clothe the spirit in flesh; rather do I give bodies to their spirits. I spiritualize bodies, I sanctify them. I do not belong to the atheists who deny, I affirm.

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs of Heinrich Heine, ed. by Gustav Karpeles, p.23.

The indifferentists, the so-called wise men who will not express an opinion on God are the real blasphemers of God. Such silent blasphemy is now a social crime, for by its misconceptions are subserved, which have always been a prop for despotism. The beginning and end of all things is God." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p.285 .



## CHAPTER XI

## The Religion of Freedom

Deutscher S<sup>1</sup>änger! sing und preise  
 Deutsche Freiheit, dass sein Lied  
 Unserer Seelen sich bemeist<sup>e</sup>  
 Und zu Taten ens begeistre  
 In Marseillerh<sup>u</sup>mmerweise.

Girre nicht mehr wie ein<sup>1</sup> Werther  
 Welcher nur für Lotte glüht-  
 Was die Glocke hat geschlagen  
 Sollst du deinem Volke sagen,  
 Rede Dolche, rede Schwerter!<sup>1</sup>

In Reise von München nach Genoa,<sup>2</sup> Heine asks what is the great task of our time. The answer is emancipation, not only that of the Irish, Greeks, Frankfort Jews, West Indian blacks and other oppressed peoples, but the emancipation of all the world, especially of Europe, which is now breaking away from the iron chains of aristocracy. A few philosophical renegades of freedom may try to forge the finest chains to prove to us that millions of men were created to be the beasts of burden to a few thousand privileged knights. They cannot convince us, unless they can prove, as Voltaire says, that the former came into the world with saddles on their backs, and the latter with spurs on their feet.

Every age has its task, and solving it brings humanity farther forward. The former inequality brought about by

<sup>1</sup> Neue Gedichte, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> p. 63.

the feudal system was perhaps necessary in the progress of civilization, but now it is an impeding progress, and civilized hearts rise against it. This inequality has aroused the French most of all. They tried to force equality by snipping off the heads of those above them, and the Revolution was a signal for the liberation of mankind. This desire for freedom deserves as well as any other the title of religion.

Jeder Zeit glaubt, ihr Kampf sei vor allem der wichtigste, dieses ist der eigentliche Glaube der Zeit, in diesem lebt sie und stirbt sie, und auch wir wollen leben in dieser Freiheitsreligion, der vielleicht mehr den Namen Religion verdient, als das hohle, ausgestorbene Seelengespenst das wir noch so zu benennen pflegen-unser heiliger Kampf dunkt uns der wichtigste, wofür jemals auf dieser Erde gekämpft worden, obgleich historische Ahnung uns sagt, dass einst unsre Enkel auf diesen Kampf herabsehen werden, vielleicht mit demselben Gleichgültigkeitsgefühl, womit wir herabsehen auf den Kampf der ersten Menschen, die gegen ebenso gierige Ungetume, Lindwürmer und Raubreifen, zu kämpfen hatten.<sup>1</sup>

Again in Englische Fragmente,<sup>2</sup> Heine declares that freedom is the new religion of our time, and if Christ is not the God of this religion, He is at least one of its high priests, and His name irradiates with its blessings the hearts of its disciples. The French are the chosen people of the new religion, for in its language its earliest gospels and doctrines were recorded. Paris is the new Jerusalem, the Rhine is the River Jordan that separates

<sup>1</sup> Reise von München nach Genua, p.64.

<sup>2</sup> p.260.

the Holy Land of Liberty from the country of the Philistines.

Heine had early come into contact with the French ideals. The emancipation of the Jews during the French occupation of Düsseldorf he could never forget, and Napoleon became his hero-god. One of Napoleon's drummers, Le Grand, whom Heine has immortalized in Das Buch Le Grand, had lived with the Heines in Düsseldorf, and he taught the child Heine the meaning of liberty by means of the stirring songs he drummed out. Heine saw the poor Le Grand again, a tattered, emaciated figure, on his return from the retreat of Moscow, and he understood the sad, pleading eyes which looked into his:

Monsieur Le Grand hat in diesem Leben nie mehr getrommelt. Auch seine Trommel hat nie mehr einen Ton von sich gegeben, sie sollte keinem Feinde der Freiheit zu einem servilen Zapfenstreich dienen, ich hatte den letzten, flehenden Blick Le Grands sehr gut verstanden, und zog sogleich den Degen aus meinem Stock und zerstach die Trommel.<sup>1</sup>

This same event is again immortalized in Die Zwei Grenadiere, the two grenadiers of which symbolize the love and adoration of the whole French army for their emperor.

Heine's enthusiasm for Napoleon led him into an exaggerated estimate of the value of the French ideas of

<sup>1</sup> Das Buch Le Grand, p. 148.

freedom, which he later modified. In his first feeling of enthusiasm, he wrote of Napoleon:

Ein solcher ist Napoleon Bonaparte. Wir wissen von ihm, von seinem Leben und Streben, mehr als von den anderen Grossen der Erde, und täglich erfahren wir davon noch mehr und mehr. Wir sehen wie das verschüttete Gotterbild langsam ausgegraben wird, und mit jeder Schaufel Erdschlamm, die man von ihm abnimmt, wächst unser freudiges Erstaunen über das Ebenmass und die Pracht der edlen Formen, die da hervorgetreten, und die Geistesblitze der Feinde, die das grosse Bild zerschmettern wollen, dienen nur dazu, es glanzvoller zu beleuchten.<sup>1</sup>

Heine says in Englische Fragmente,<sup>2</sup> that the old cathedrals, piled in towering height by an arrogantly pious race, which would force its faith to heaven, are crumbling, and their gods have ceased to believe in themselves. Those divinities are worn out, and our age lacks the imagination to fashion others. Every power in the human breast now tends to a love of liberty, and liberty is the religion of the modern age. It is a religion not preached to the rich, but to the poor, and in like manner, it has its evangelists, its martyrs, its Iscariots. Heine's English companion at the time replied to him that Heine might not find what he sought. He might be right in believing that liberty is a new religion which will spread throughout the world. But as every race of old, when it received Christianity, did so according to its requirements and peculiar character,

<sup>1</sup> Die Nordsee, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> p. 203.

so at present every country adopts from the new idea of liberty only that which is in accordance with its local needs and national character. Thus, the English want personal freedom. A free Englishman cares nothing for the court comedy of St. James, as long as no one interferes when he plays comedy in like manner in his own home with his servants. The Frenchman can dispense with personal freedom, if we only grant him a portion of universal liberty known as equality. The Germans need neither liberty nor equality. They are a speculative race, ideologists, prophets and sages, dreamers who live only in the past and in the future, and have no present. Englishmen and Frenchmen have a present. With them, every day has its field of action, its struggles against its enemies, its history. The German has nothing for which to battle, and when he began to realize that there were things worth fighting for, his philosophizing wiseacres taught him to doubt the existence of such things.

In his essay on Wellington, Heine is irritated that Wellington will be as immortal as Napoleon Bonaparte:

Was mir am meisten ärgert, ist der Gedanke, dass Arthur Wellington ebenso unsterblich wird wie Napoleon Bonaparte. Ist doch, in ähnlicher Weise, der Name Pontius Pilate ebenso unvergesslich geblieben wie der Name Christi. "Wellington und Napoleon! Es ist ein wunderbares Phänomen, dass der menschliche Geist sich beide zu gleicher Zeit denken kann. Es gibt keine grössere Kontraste als diese beiden, schon in ihrer äusseren Erscheinung. Wellington, das dumme Gespenst, mit einer aschengrauen Seele in einem steif-leinen Körper, ein hölzernes Lächeln in dem frier-

enden Gesichte-daneben denke man sich das Bild Napoleons, jeder Zoll ein Gott! <sup>1</sup>

As with every other loyalty, Heine is fickle, for he later says that it is certainly true that the dead Napoleon is more beloved by the French than the living Lafayette.<sup>2</sup> That is perhaps because he is dead, which is the most delightful thing connected with him, for if he were alive, Heine would be obliged to fight him. The name Napoleon is the best word to conjure with among the people. He is its God, its cult, its religion, and this religion will, by and by, become tiresome, like every other.

He sums up his later feelings for his one-time hero in the following words. The Emperor is dead and buried. Let us praise him and sing of his deeds, but let us thank God that he is dead. In him died the last hero after the old fashion, and modern Philistinism breathes freely as if released from a brilliant nightmare. Over his tomb springs up the era of industrialism, an era that admires quite other heroes, as, for example, the virtuous Lafayette, or James Watt.

<sup>1</sup> Französische Zustände, p. 79.

## CHAPTER XII

## Heine's Last Days.

Heine's personal life had not been without reproach. Even at Göttingen, he had begun to suffer headaches and other symptoms of a social disease to which his excesses had brought him. In Paris, he lay for eight years before his death on his "mattress grave", and suffered intolerably. He was cared for by his wife, Mathilde, whom he had married only to be assured that she would be cared for after his death. His sufferings were so great that he could say in his poem, Morphine,

Gut ist der Schlaf, der Tod ist besser, - freilich  
Das beste ist, nie geboren sein.<sup>1</sup>

During this long life-in-death period, Heine had plenty of time to review his spiritual life and to ponder the questions which had tormented him all his life, and which screamed for solution. Most of all came a longing for harmony and peace with himself and with God, and for something, perhaps, to protect himself from his own jests. He was no longer a "joyous, somewhat corpulent Hellenist,"<sup>2</sup> but a poor, fatally-ill Jew, an emaciated picture of woe, an unhappy man. The religious upheaval which took place in him was an intellectual rather than a spiritual emotion.

<sup>1</sup> Nachlese, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> Louis Untermeyer, Heinrich Heine, p.322.

He poured out his feelings in Nachwort zum Romanzero.<sup>1</sup>

When a man is on his deathbed, he becomes sentimental and softened, and he wishes to have peace. A homesickness comes over him at last. On his way home, he had found the god of Pantheism, but he could not use him. He was not a god at all, and Pantheists are shameful atheists, and philosophers are not much better. Nor could he accept the God of the Christians, although he could return to the old superstition of a personal God. It is true that Jesus Christ was a great emancipator, as Napoleon was. As for Judaism, he could say with Isaac in Der Rabbi:

Ja, ich bin ein Heide, und ebenso zuwider wie die dürren freudenlosen Hebräer sind mir die trüben qualsuchtigen Nazariner. Unsere liebe Frau von Sidon, die heilige Astarte, mag es mir verzeihen, dass ich vor der schmerzreichen Mutter des Gekreuzigten niederknie und bete,... nur meine Knie und meine Zunge huldigt dem Tode, mein Herz blieb treu dem Leben.<sup>2</sup>

The thought of total annihilation of the soul after death was abhorrent to him.

Wie sträubt meine Seele gegen den Gedanken des Aufhorens unserer Persönlichkeit, der ewigen Vernichtung! Der horror vacui, den man der Natur zuschreibt, ist vielmehr dem menschlichen Gemüte angeboren. Sei getröst, lieber Leser, es gibt ein Fortdauer nach dem Tode.<sup>3</sup>

Heine tried on his "mattress grave" to forgive his enemies, and asked pardon of many of them. His relatives, however,

<sup>1</sup> p. 265

<sup>2</sup> Der Rabbi von Bacharach, p.70.

<sup>3</sup> Nachwort zum Romanzero, p. 269.



he found hard to forgive, even though he was supposed, as a Christian, to be charitable.

Sie küssten mich mit ihren falschen Lippen  
 Sie haben mich kredenzt den Saft der Reben  
 Sie haben mich dabei mit Gift vergeben  
 Das taten mir die Magen und die Sippen.

Es schmilzt das Fleisch von meinen armen Rippen  
 Ich kann mich nicht vom Siechbett mehr erheben  
 Arglistig stahlen sie mein junges Leben -  
 Das taten mir die Magen und die Sippen.

Ich bin ein Chrst- wie es im Kirchenbuche  
 Bescheinigt steht - deshalb, bevor ich sterbe  
 Will ich euch fromm und bruderlich verzeihen.

Es wird mir sauer- ach! mit einem Fluche  
 Möcht' ich weit lieber euch vermaledeien;<sup>1</sup>  
 Dass euch der Herr verdamme und verderbe.

Heine had once held a contempt for death-bed conversions. We should not make too much of the fact that many free thinkers have been converted on their death beds. Such stories belong best to pathology and are very doubtful evidence. After all, they only prove that it was impossible to convert these free thinkers as long as they were about under God's open sky in the enjoyment of their healthy senses, and in full possession of their reasoning faculties. On his deathbed, however, his opinion changed, and he could say:

Ach! der Spott Gottes lastet schwer auf mir. Der grosse Autor des Weltalls, der Aristophanes des Himmels, wollte dem kleinen irdischen sogenannten deutschen Aristophanes

<sup>1</sup> Nachlese, p.54.

recht grell dartun, wie die witzigsten Sarkasm desselben nur als armselige Spottereien gewesen im Vergleich mit dem seinigen, und wie kläglich ich ihm nachstehen muss im Humor, in der kolossalen Spassmacherei.

Ja, die Lauge der Verhöhnung, die der Meister über mich herabgeusst, ist entsetzlich, und schauerlich grausam ist sein Spass. Demütig bekenne ich seine Überlegenheit, und ich beuge mich vor ihm im Staube.<sup>1</sup>

He continues, however, by saying that the sport which the Master has inflicted on the poor pupil is rather too long drawn out. It has lasted six years, and after a time it becomes monotonous.

He expressly contradicts the rumor that the return to a personal God has brought him to the threshold of any church, much less into its fold.<sup>2</sup> Rather, his religious convictions have remained free from all sectarianism. He has been enticed by no church bell, he has been dazzled by no altar lights. He has coquetted with no symbolism, and has not utterly renounced his reason. He has adjured nothing, not even his old heathen gods, from whom, it is true, he has turned aside, although parting from them in love and friendship.

As to the Lutheran faith to which he was pledged, he says:

"Jetzt wo durch das Wiedererwachen des religiösen Gefühls, sowie auch durch meine körperlichen Leiden, mancherlei Veränderung in mir vorgegangen-entspricht jetzt die lutherische Glaubensuniform einigermaßen meinem

<sup>1</sup> Geständnisse, P.66.

<sup>2</sup> Nachwort zum Romanzero, p.267.

innersten Gedanken? Inwieweit ist das offizielle Bekenntnis zur Wahrheit geworden? Solcher Frage will ich durch keine direkte Beantwortung begegnen, sie soll mir nur eine Gelegenheit bieten, die Verdienste zu beleuchten, die sich der Protestantismus, nach meiner jetzigen Ansicht, um das Heil der Welt erworben; und man mag danach ermessen, inwiefern ihm eine grössere Sympathie von meiner Seite gewonnen ward.<sup>1</sup>

Religion involves the acceptance of a Supreme Being.

Heine was willing to accept god, but not God. He could conform to no organized faith, Jewish or Christian. He was terribly irritated that he could not form a mental photograph of God. God as pure spirit was unthinkable, He must have form, yet "roher anthropomorphismus" was also unthinkable. Religion requires some form of worship. He tried praying on his "mattress grave", but was ashamed of having done so. Religion requires humility, and Heine, the egoist, was quite incapable of humility. So, at the last, he died as he had lived, a paradox of skepticism and belief.

He asked to be buried with no ostentation and no eulogy.

Keine Messe wird man singen  
Keinen Kadosch wird man sagen  
Nichts gesagt und nichts gesungen  
Wird an meinen Sterbetagen.

Doch vielleicht an solchem Tage  
Wenn das Wetter schön und milde  
Geht spazieren auf Mohtmarte  
Mit Paulinen Frau Matilde.

<sup>1</sup> Geständnisse, p. 52.

Mit dem Kranz von Immortellen  
 Kommt sie mir das Grab zu schmücken  
 Und sie seufzet: Pauvre homme!  
 Feuchte Wehmüt in ihr Blicken.

Leider wohn' ich viel zu hoch  
 Und ich habe meiner Süssen  
 Keinen Stuhl hier anzubieten;  
 Ach! sie schwankt mit müden Füßen.

Süsses, dickes Kind, du darfst  
 Nicht zu Fuss nach Hause gehen  
 Auf dem Barriere-Gitter  
 Siehst du die Fiaker stehen.<sup>1</sup>

In his will, Heine states his desires clearly:

Ich verordene dass mein Leichenbegangnis so einfach und so wenig kostspielig wie das des geringsten Mannes im Volke. Sterbe ich in Paris, so will ich auf dem Kirchhof des Montmarte begraben werden, auf keinem anderen, denn unter der Bevölkerung des Fauberg Montmarte habe ich mein liebstes Leben gelebt. Obgleich ich der lutherisch-protestantischen Konfession angehöre, so wünsche ich doch in jenem Teile des Kirchhofs beerdigt zu werden, welcher den Bekennern des römisch-katholischen Glaubens angewiesen ist, damit die irdischen Reste meiner Frau, die dieser Religion mit grossem Eifer zugetan ist, einst neben den meinigen ruhen können; wird mir eine solche Begünstigung von der christlichen Barmherzigkeit der französischen Geistlichkeit bewilligt, so wünsche ich, dass man mir in der erwähnten Abteilung des Gottesackers ein Erdegrabnis kaufe; zeigt sich aber klerikale Schwierigkeiten, genügt mir ein Terrein der wohlfeilsten Art.<sup>2</sup>

The French version of his will expresses even more clearly his ultimate religious sentiments:

Par act de bapteme, j'appartiens a l'église chrétienne et evangelique, mais ma pensee n'a jamais sympathisé avec les croyances d'aucune religion, et après avoir vécu en bon payen, je désire aussi mourir sans que le sacerdote soit envie' a mes funeraillles. J'exige que ces dernières soient aussi peu coûteuses que possible. En autre

<sup>1</sup> Romanzero, p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> Testamente, Vol. 15, p. 126.

je defends a qui que ce soit de prononcer un discours sur ma tombe.<sup>1</sup>

Heine died true to form, with a blasphemous jest upon his lips. "Dieu me pardonnera," he said, "c'est son metier." He was accompanied to the cemetery at Montmartre by many of the famous of Paris, including Gauthier, Dumas, Mignet, Alexandre Weill, and others. A simple monument, erected in 1901 by some Viennese admirers, marks his resting place.

<sup>1</sup> Testaments, v 15, p. 128.

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